
FORT BROWN HISTORICAL

By JOSEPH C. SIDES

Chaplain, United States Army



*History of Fort Brown, Texas
Border Post on the Rio Grande*

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*To my wife, Dorothea, whose
inspiration and help have meant
so much in the accomplishment
of this volume.*

FOREWORD

In 1946 Fort Brown will have rounded out a century of existence. During most of this time it has been actively occupied, as it is today, by troops of the United States Army. Its beginning was unique, in that the original forts, parts of which are yet visible, was an earthwork constructed within easy range of hostile batteries posted on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande. From these the new fort soon received its baptism of fire, and the area in which it was located immediately became one of the battlefields of the long past war with our now friendly neighbor, Mexico. Today, this battlefield provides training grounds for troops which are preparing to take their part in the world-wide conflict of the present, and, happily, similar preparations are being made against the common enemy by our sister republic south of the Rio Grande.

To all who are interested in the colorful history of the lower Rio Grande Valley, to all who are interested in preserving the record of localities in which events important in the development of our country have occurred, and especially to the thousands of officers and men of our army who at various times in the past have been stationed at Fort Brown, Chaplain Sides has rendered a valuable service in the

preparation of this volume in which the story
of this old frontier post is so well told.

DONALD A. ROBINSON,
Brigadier General, U. S. Army.

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INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1939 Colonel Arthur E. Wilbourn, commanding officer of Fort Brown, Texas directed me, as Chaplain and library officer, to prepare a history of the Post. The manuscript was not completed until after my transfer to Fort Riley, Kansas.

Fort Brown has a very colorful past. Its defense by Major Brown and Captain Hawkins, together with the successes of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, laid the foundation for General Taylor's rise to the presidency. The Post has been visited by Generals Grant, Lee, and Lew Wallace, author of *Ben Hur*. The last battle of the Civil War was fought only a few miles from the reservation. Before going to Panama, General Wm. Crawford Gorgas was stationed at Fort Brown and at the station hospital there made his first studies of yellow fever. Here too Surgeon General Torney first demonstrated his skill in lowering the sick rate of troops, by improving the sanitation of the surroundings.

The source materials have for the most part been found in executive documents from the War College Library in Washington. In addition to these old orders and letters, a number of books (some of which are nearly 100 years

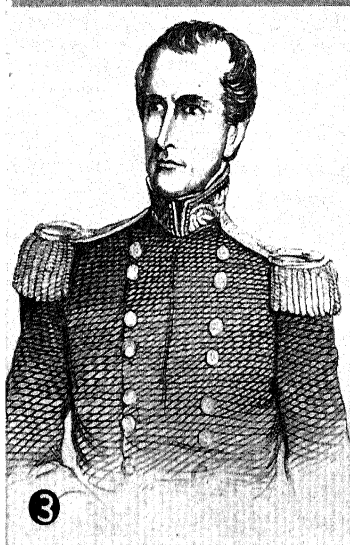
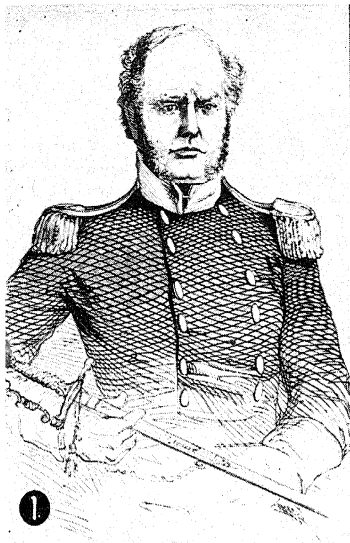
of age), have been very helpful. In contrast to that of other periods, the literature of the Mexican War period is excessive in length, due to the abundance of incidents occurring during this era, and its relative significance historically. So numerous are the documents that only the more important have been included in this monograph.

While gathering material I had a very interesting interview with Miss Grace Clark, who is considered the only living native of Clarksville, the "Ghost City," which for a number of years was a thriving village at the mouth of the Rio Grande. The daughter of Captain and Mrs. William Henry Clark, she was born at Clarksville August 24, 1860. Her father operated a boat on the Gulf of Mexico and the Rio Grande, transporting supplies from New Orleans for General Taylor's Army. Captain Clark was personally acquainted with Major Brown.

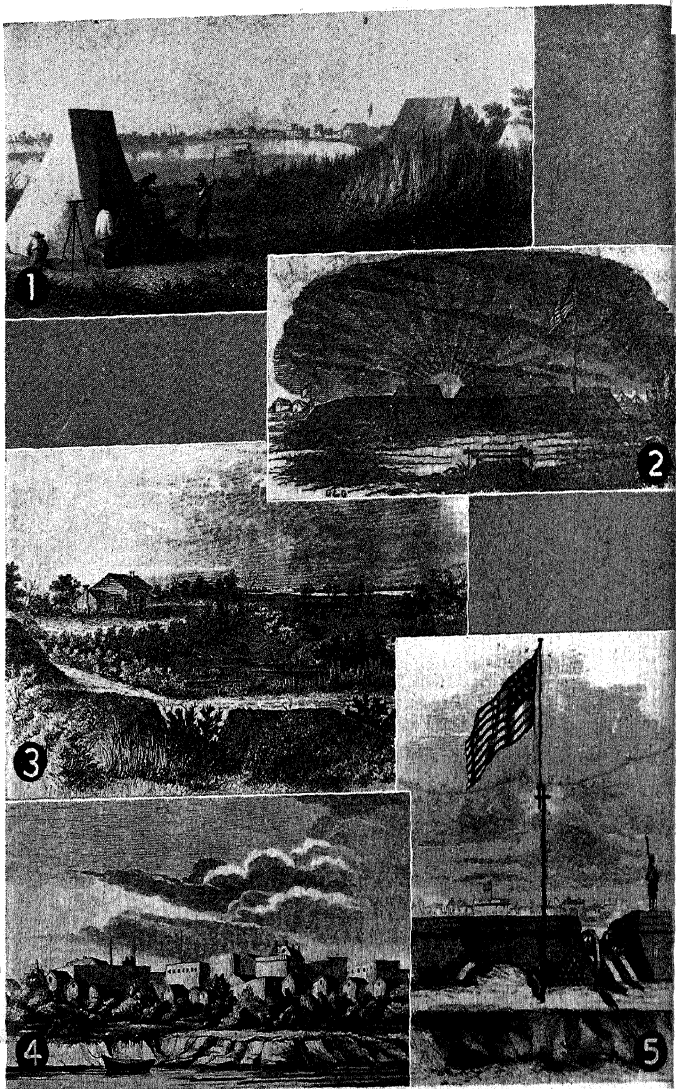
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph C. Sides". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Chaplain, United States Army

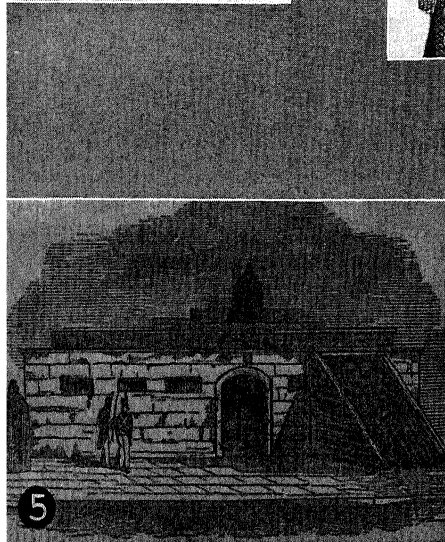
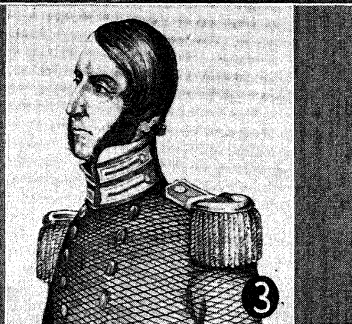
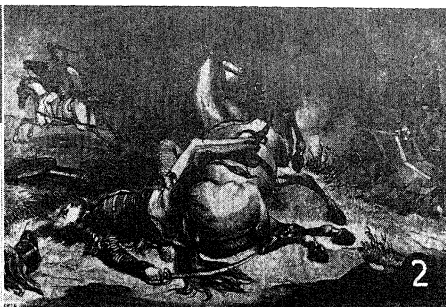
Fort Riley, Kansas,
June 17, 1941.



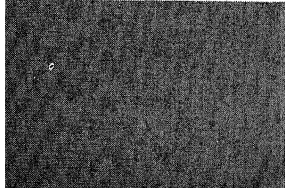
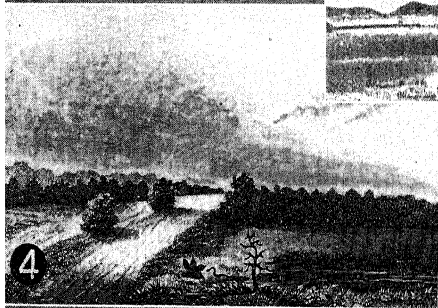
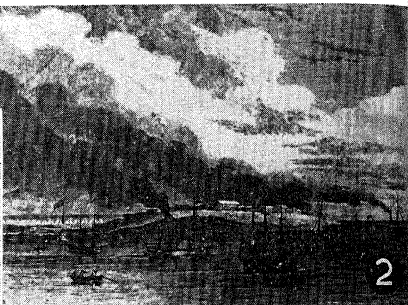
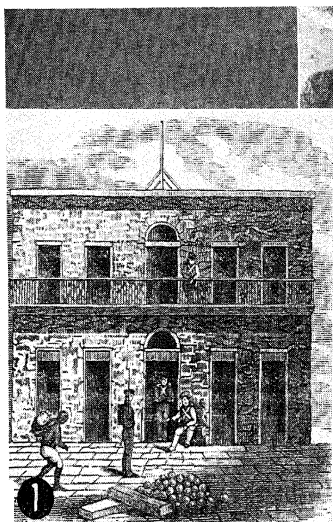
1. General Twiggs. 2. General Taylor. 3. General Wood. 4. Colonel Cross.



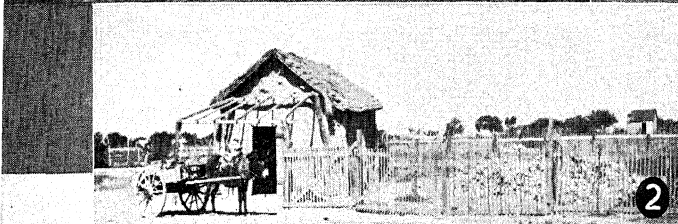
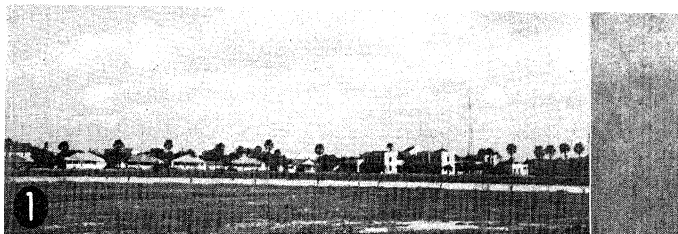
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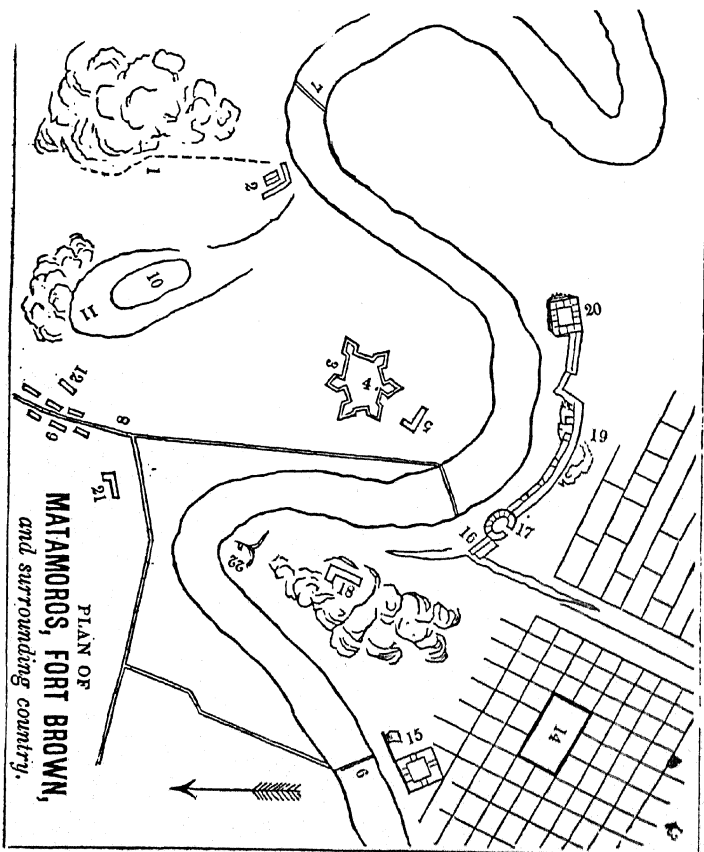


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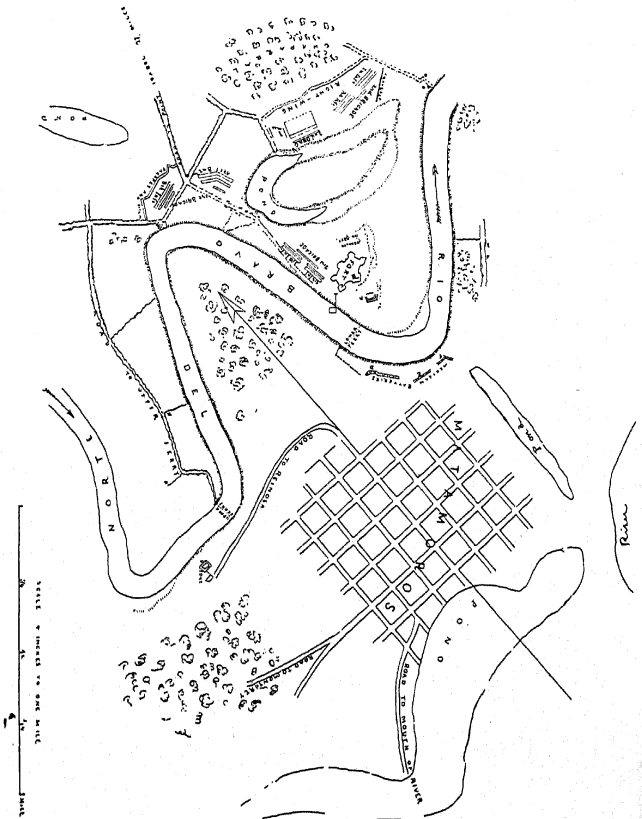
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April 21 - 1846.

- A. BACCS GRIFFIN
J. F. Adams and Theobald
B. DUNCAN Dr. A.
I. MILGROD Dr. A.
C. LEON GRIFFIN Dr. A. and
D. CAROL GRIFFIN 5 Franklinburg
with 2 more on the way
E. GRIFFIN with 4 embryos.
F. GRIFFIN with 5 embryos
G. JOSIE with 1 embryo
H. GEORGE REDDY with 4 embryos

Return for Mrs. Mearns
by her effect home here
off Marine Corps Signal.





**IN THIS HOSPITAL IN AUG. 1882
MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM CRAWFORD GORGAS
SURGEON GENERAL U.S. ARMY, THEN
FIRST LIEUT. ASSISTANT SURGEON
FIRST STUDIED YELLOW FEVER.
LARGELY THROUGH GEN. GORGAS WORK
YELLOW FEVER IS NO LONGER FOUND
IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

2



1. Entrance to Ft. Brown. 2. Gorgas Plaque, (Ft. Brown Hospital). 3. Station Hospital, Ft. Brown.

Chapter I

Texas: Its Background and Problem

THE INCEPTION of Fort Brown grew out of troubles existing between the United States and Mexico, especially as they were related to the problem of Texas.

For some centuries that vast territory now known as Texas was undoubtedly a wild, desolate desert. Although parts of it were roamed by the Indians, it was, for the most part, uninhabited, except along the Rio Grande.

The first European settlement of Texas came about when on July 24, 1684 the French explorer, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, sailed a second time for America.

In his four ships he carried about three hundred people; among them were women, as well as priests, soldiers, and mechanics.

He also had tools, cannon, ammunition, huge supplies of provisions—in short, everything to make the colony a success. After a stormy voyage, during which

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one of his vessels was captured near Santo Domingo by the Spaniards, La Salle and his men came into the Gulf of Mexico. This was to them an unknown body of water. They did not know even the latitude and longitude of their destination, the mouth of the Mississippi. La Salle had one opinion, the captain another, and the pilot still another. It is then not surprising that they sailed too far south and west, passing even below Matagorda Bay. Fearing that they had made a mistake, La Salle sent out exploring parties, one of which found an inlet that the leader felt sure was one of the mouths of the great river. "La Belle," (the ship King Louis the XIV, then ruler of France had given La Salle), entered Matagorda Bay February, 1685, but the "Amiable" was wrecked in trying to cross the bar. The colonists soon built a fort on Lavaca River, which they called Fort Louis; here were erected the cross and arms of France, while all the surrounding country (all lands between Mexico and Louisiana) was declared subject to the French monarch.¹

Spain declared herself the lawful owner of Texas for the following reasons: (1) The discovery of America by Columbus. (2) The conquest of Mexico (of which Texas was considered a part) by the Spanish under Cortez. (3) The explorations of various Spanish discoverers, among whom were Navarez, Cabeza de Vaca, Coronado, De Soto (whose expedition passed near where Texarkana now stands), and Espejo, who made halts at El Paso and Santa Fé. She also asserted her sovereignty of the entire Gulf of Mexico. The Spanish King, Philip II, forbade, on pain of death, anyone save his own subjects sailing on the Gulf. It was in obedience to this order that one of La Salle's ships had been captured.²

¹ Anna J. H. Pennybacker, *New History of Texas*, pp. 4 and 5.

² Anna J. H. Pennybacker, *New History of Texas*, p. 10.

Texas: Its Background and Problem

Spanish settlements gained a foothold through and because of the missions for which their padres became famous. Their chief objectives were first, to convert the natives to the Roman Catholic Faith, and secondly, to take possession of the country in the name of their king. Every mission was a combination of chapel and fortress. Most of the priests active in this work were Franciscan monks. The more famous of these missions were: *San José* founded at San Antonio in 1720; *Mission Concepción*, founded at San Antonio in 1731; *Alamo*, founded on the Rio Grande in 1700 and later moved to San Antonio; *San Saba*, founded in Menard County on the San Saba River in 1757; and the *Mission of Our Lady of Refuge*, founded at Refugio in 1791. These missions are still an attraction to tourists.

Eventually the Spanish realized that colonists were needed to supplement the missions. Hence, in 1728 for example, thirteen families of pure Spanish blood and intense religious zeal were brought to Texas from the Canary Islands, and from this group there sprang quite a posterity.

France, having become inactive, so far as Texas was concerned, relinquished her claims altogether by ceding "Louisiana" to Spain in 1762. This was the result of wars at home, mainly with Britain. Soon Spain too found herself in war, particularly with Napoleon.

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She seemed to react from her losses at home by tightening the reins on her colonies across the Atlantic. This was resented by all: the Mexicans, the Spanish priests, the French, the Indians, and last but not least the Americans, many of whom were beginning to move into this frontier area. Mexico revolted against the tyrannical rule of Spain, and finally in 1823 established a republic. Meantime Texas had been shifted about. Spain quietly and demurely returned Louisiana to France in 1803, in exchange for Tuscany. At the insistence of Thomas Jefferson, then President, the United States acquired this huge area of land the same year, the price being the paltry sum of \$15,-000,000. Napoleon acceded to this sale of territory because he was in great need of funds to finance his campaigns in Europe, and because the far-away lands were difficult to contact and defend with Britain in control of the seas. Spain objected to the deal and reasserted her claim to Texas.

Americans moving into Texas were ill received by the Spanish. The latter regarded them as aliens, and their encroachment upon soil belonging to the crown of *Hispania* was often punished by slavery or death. But as the immigrating parties increased in numbers and strength, the Spanish were occasionally repulsed. Strange things happened, such as the union of bodies of Americans and Mexicans,

Texas: Its Background and Problem

sometimes led by a Mexican. Goliad, Rosillo and Alazan were scenes of important conflicts between the American entrepreneurs and Spanish adventurers.

Officially the United States, in 1819, gave up all claim to Texas in exchange for Florida. However, expeditions of adventurous pioneers from the sections east of the Father of Waters continued to spread over the broad prairies so recently owned and roamed by the Comanches, Apaches, and Tejas (Texas deriving its name from this last named group, consisting of nearly thirty tribes). Under the leadership of men like James Long, Moses Austin, his son Stephen F. Austin, Green DeWitt, and Hayden Edwards, the colonists prospered and their numbers increased.

Simultaneously, the Mexicans were colonizing under the empresario system. In 1824, by an act of the government of Mexico, Texas was joined to Coahuila, with the capital at Saltillo, and for a time foreigners were encouraged to settle there. In 1830 there were 20,000 Americans in Texas. Mexico's struggle to become a republic involved several revolutions, and the friendly attitude toward Americans was soon reversed. Crystallization of this enmity took place under the leadership of Santa Anna, who, at first, had the support of both Mexicans and Texans. But the latter's petition to the government of Mexico to separate from

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Coahuila and become the state of Texas was answered with armed force and massacres. As a result, in a convention held in the little town of Washington, the Texans declared their independence on March 2, 1836. Five days later the Alamo massacre occurred and war was on. In the organization and defense of Texas at this time names like Austin, Bowie, Crockett, Travis, Fannin, and Houston will always be remembered. The last mentioned of this group captured Santa Anna on the morning following the battle of San Jacinto, which was fought April 21, 1836. Houston, backed by President David G. Burnet of Texas and supported by President Andrew Jackson of the United States, unwisely released his distinguished prisoner, and the "Napoleon of the West" (as Santa Anna termed himself) lived to fight again.

A treaty of peace was made with Santa Anna while he was held prisoner. Of course it was not recognized by the Republic of Mexico and amounted to no more than a scrap of paper, except for effecting the release of Santa Anna. The people could hardly help but realize that some day skirmishes with Mexico would be renewed. They realized further that should the Mexican armies invade the territory claimed by Texas, in all probability, help would be needed, and the most logical source from which to obtain it was the friendly peoples to the East and North. Already had much aid come from

Texas: Its Background and Problem

them in both men and materials, especially from southern states such as Louisiana and Mississippi.

The acquisition of Texas by the United States had been a subject of negotiation for 20 years, and, following 10 years of independence, the republic made formal application for admission to the Union. Hot debates in Congress and violent discussions all over the country were the order of the day. The slave states favored annexation, for, as Senator Benton of Missouri pointed out in Congress, it would maintain the pro-slavery-anti-slavery balance in the United States Senate. Opposition to annexation came, quite naturally, from the anti-slave Whig and Free Soil elements of the North under the leadership of Daniel Webster.³

On March 1, 1845 Texas was admitted into the Union by a joint resolution of the Congress of the United States. Texas' ratification of the annexation is well described in General Howard's work:

The Texas Congress assembled in accordance with President Anson Jones' call of date June 4, at Washington, Texas, June 16, 1845. After debate, by a joint resolution approved June 23, 1845, the Congress assented to the conditions for annexation, and ordered a call for a convention to assemble at the city of Austin July 4, 1845. The convention met pursuant to the above

³ Horatio O. Ladd, *History of the War With Mexico*, p. 27.

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call, and on the day it assembled, passed unanimously an ordinance, the fifty-seven delegates sent from previous county conventions subscribing to the same. The clause of the ordinance is as follows: Now in order to manifest the sentiment of the people of this republic, as required in the above recited portions of the said resolutions (those of the Texas Congress and of the Congress of the United States, Mar. 1, 1845) we, the deputies of the people of Texas, in convention assembled, in their name and by their authority, do ordain and declare that we assent to and accept the proposals, conditions, and guarantees contained in the first and second sections of the resolutions of the Congress of the United States aforesaid.⁴

This act naturally antagonized Mexico, who had never recognized the independence of Texas or relinquished her claim of sovereignty over the area. There was a further dispute over the dividing line, Mexico insisting it was the Nueces River and Texas maintaining it should be the Rio Grande del Norte. Mexico seemed far more inclined to maintain this latter claim by force than to attempt enforcement of the former. In fact, while officially denying the independence of Texas, the government of Mexico tacitly admitted it by many acts and more omissions.

⁴ Oliver Otis Howard, *General Taylor*, p. 84.

Chapter II

Prelude To War

THE CHIEF ATTEMPT to compose the disagreements between the United States and Mexico consisted in the dispatch of John Slidell, who, in the words of Smith was an "agreeable man, able lawyer and excellent Spanish scholar."⁵ His instructions were to pay as much as 40 million dollars, if necessary, for a satisfactory boundary settlement. Slidell was further instructed, "at all events conciliate the good will of the Mexicans, even should their vanity and resentment prove trying."⁶ Although Slidell was very undiplomatically, perhaps discourteously, received, his mission might have succeeded had it not been that Herrera, then President of the Re-

⁵ Justin H. Smith, *The War With Mexico*, Vol. 1, p. 91.

⁶ Justin H. Smith, *The War With Mexico*, Vol. I, p. 95.

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public of Mexico, had allowed his administration to sink to a low ebb in efficiency, prestige, and responsibility. As Smith says:

Every morning it looked for a revolution, and every night for a mutiny. Its one idea was to hold on until the assembling of Congress on the first of January, in the hope that something favorable might then occur; and it found this last resource threatened by its reasonable and pacific policy in regard to the United States. Earlier in the year it had been denounced for agreeing to recognize Texas on the condition of her abandoning all thoughts of joining the American Union, and now it was menaced for listening to Black and Buchanan. A call for war in the name of honor, territory and independence appeared to be a serviceable oriflamme for its political enemies. Fierce, unsparing cries of treason, ignominy and national ruin therefore assailed Herrera; and under these onslaughts the weak, timid, irresolute administration lost heart.⁷

In a short while Herrera, seeing the army revolt under his own eyes, abdicated and left the reins of government in the hands of Paredes, who led an aristocratic combination of church, army and monarchists. With this new administration the American minister, Slidell, made a second attempt to settle questions of dispute between the two nations, but was rejected by the Paredes administration in a fashion similar to that in which he had met with the Herrera group.

The justice of these conflicting claims is not the purpose of this monograph to discuss.

⁷ Justin H. Smith, *The War With Mexico*, Vol. I, p. 95.

Prelude to War

It suffices to say that each side has had many and voluble champions. The motive of this presentation is solely that of recording and describing the events as they occurred, and noting their relationship to the establishment and maintenance of Fort Brown. In all fairness it should be stated that the United States made a strong effort to preserve peace with Mexico through diplomatic negotiations.

Several quotations from Ladd⁸ give us a picture of the two countries during the decade in which the war occurred.

During the period of 1840 to 1850, within which the war with Mexico occurred, the United States was composed of twenty-seven States, extending from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada, and from the Atlantic seaboard to the present tier of States just beyond the west bank of the Mississippi as far northward as Wisconsin. The most western State was Missouri. Louisiana was on the south-western border. One half of the States, as far as the Chip River and including Missouri, was slave territory, of which the raising of cotton and corn was the chief industry.

A remarkable degree of prosperity prevailed at this period in the whole country. The wonderful agricultural resources of the prairie States were being largely developed. The wheels of industry were humming all over the Eastern States, which were also extensively engaged in shipping. Their mercantile navy competed with that of Great Britain for the commerce of the seas.

Mexico had within only a few years wheeled into line

⁸ Ladd, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-15.

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with the few republics of the world. Her population was composed of the native Indian, descended from the Aztec people of the middle centuries, mixed with the Spanish and other Southern races. The Spaniards, having first conquered the inhabitants of this rich and beautiful country, by a steady stream of immigration and an oppressive military rule, had held them in subjection for two centuries and a half, without developing the resources of the land for the benefit of its original owners. At the time of this foreign war, the passionate, luxury loving Spanish *caballeros*, the sluggish Indians, and the preponderating *Mestizos*, or half-breeds, made up its population, over which the Roman Catholic priests held an enervating sway, not only in matters of religion, but as one of the ruling political powers of the land.

There were six states in the Mexican Confederation. They occupied a country rich with mines of gold and silver, a tropical climate, and fertile soil. They had an indolent population, largely given to the work on plantations, and unaccustomed to the demands of self-government, by reason of centuries of subjection to a foreign power. The sentiment of the people was divided between monarchy and republicanism.

The Mexican army lacked the discipline which the permanent officers and a strong and well-ordered government creates; but the National Congress, in their pride of self-government, had a sense of importance equal to that of the parliaments of the oldest nation's extant.

The grim realities of international conflict are always hard to face, and the inevitable throes of struggle are seldom comprehended until their presence is certain. So it was with the Mexican War. There is every evidence that the United States doubted the probability of battle

Prelude to War

with her neighbor on the south until it was being fought on the banks of the Rio Grande.

On the other hand President Polk and his extremely able and energetic Secretary of War, Wm. L. Marcy, either perceived with keen insight and foresight what was about to happen, or had decided to take no chances. True, the Honorable Mr. Polk was quite cognizant that the American people, as a whole, would not look with disfavor on a war with Mexico. A letter dated June 24, 1845 to Commodore John D. Sloat, commanding the squadron of the American fleet in the Pacific, plus a communication dated July 11, 1845 addressed to Commodore D. Connor, commanding the United States naval forces in the Gulf of Mexico, and signed by George Bancroft, then Secretary of Navy and acting Secretary of War indicate how early preparations for possible conflict were actually made. A letter to the governors of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana support this point.

Chapter III

General Taylor and the "Army of Occupation"

THE FIRST TASK confronting Polk and Marcy lay in the selection of a military leader. Preferable would be an officer who had had experience in frontier life. The logic of their minds was likely that a good Indian fighter ought to make a good Mexican fighter. Their choice was destined to be Zachary Taylor.

In the days when communication was by mail or messenger, the commander of an expeditionary force into a remote section exercised an extraordinary influence not only upon the military conduct of the campaign, but upon diplomatic and political outcomes of the war. Thus an understanding of the environment, education, character and experience of General Taylor becomes indispensable to a study of the

General Taylor and the "Army of Occupation"

Mexican War for the conduct of which his government could give him only the most general directions.

Zachary Taylor was born in Orange County, Virginia, November 24, 1784; the son of Colonel Richard and Mary (Strother) Taylor. Colonel Taylor had commanded a Virginia regiment under General Washington. Before Zachary was a year old his family migrated to the banks of the Ohio River, settling near Louisville, Kentucky. Here his father acquired a large estate. Within a very short time, however, he was appointed Collector of the Port of Louisville (Louisiana as yet being a foreign country and the town on the Ohio was thus a port of entry to the country beyond the Mississippi).

The first formal education provided for young Zachary and his brothers and sisters occurred under the private tutorship of Mr. Elisha Ayres from New England. Next he underwent what meagre advantages the public schools of Kentucky afforded. Of these, Montgomery, probably Taylor's earliest biographer, says: "The character of the schools of Kentucky, at that time, as in all other new and sparsely settled districts, was not of a very elevated character."⁹

From boyhood young Zachary knew what

⁹ H. Montgomery, *Life of Taylor*, p. 16.

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it meant to fight Indians. They were a constant threat to the peace, prosperity, and safety of all pioneers who ventured westward from the Atlantic seaboard. Young Taylor was particularly skilled in warring with the red men, and this qualification, plus family connections, aided him in securing a commission as First Lieutenant in the Seventh Infantry, USA, dated May 3, 1808, and signed by President Jefferson. He was promoted to Captain November 30, 1810. He was phenomenally successful in his engagements with the Indians and was signally honored for his defense of Fort Harrison in September, 1812. During the war of 1812-14, he, with his regiment, was kept in the Northwest Territory (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan). On May 15, 1814 he was promoted to the rank of Major and assigned to the 26th United States Infantry. In March, 1815 our Army was reduced to 10,000 men. This reduction entailed lowering the rank of officers, and Taylor reverted to captain. Although there was nothing personal in this demotion, the Indian fighter resented it, and in June, 1815 went home "to make a crop of corn,"¹⁰ to use his own words. On May 17, 1816 he was back in the Army again, as President Madison recalled him to become a major in the 3rd Infantry. The next several years were spent with that

¹⁰ Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 42.



Major General Jonathan J. Wainwright reviewing the troops of the 12th Cavalry on the drill field at Fort Brown, April 1940. At the end of the drill field still remain parts of the earthworks of the original fort. Here may be seen a cannon, used in the Mexican War, marking the spot where Major Brown was fatally wounded. At the time this picture was taken, General Wainwright was a Brigadier General commanding the 1st Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division with headquarters at Fort Clark, Texas. After General MacArthur was transferred to Australia, and during the courageous fight to prevent the surrender of Corriegedor, he commanded the troops on that island fortress.

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organization, together with the 4th Infantry (at New Orleans and commanded by Colonel Wm. King), the 8th Infantry, and the 1st Infantry. During this time he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel. During his tour of duty in Louisiana (1822) he built Fort Jesup, located on the extreme frontier of the state near the Texas line. He was stationed at Baton Rouge in 1827 and 1828, and transferred in 1829 to Fort Snelling. For some years he was, to use a civilian term, superintendent in charge of Indian affairs for a section of the Northwest. On April 4, 1832, after 13 years in the same grade, he was promoted to a Colonel and placed in command of the 1st Infantry, with new station at Fort Crawford (post office address Prairie du Chein). According to General Howard, Taylor . . . "when off duty, was, during the day, generally to be found in his post library, where he soon made himself master of the most solid books, preferring works on military jurisprudence, international law, and historical sketches of battles and campaigns."¹¹ Perhaps it was then that Taylor obtained his background for success in the battles with Mexico which were to follow later.

In December 1837, Taylor, with a force of about 1200, waged the most hardy expedition against the Indians that Florida ever witnessed,

¹¹ Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

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and in recognition for his excellent services in the battle of Kissimmee (okeechobee) he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General by brevet.

After so many years of fighting Indians Zachary Taylor grew weary of the job and asked to be relieved from this duty. Following some delay his request was granted at Washington, April 21, 1840, and Taylor "passed back to Fort Jesup, Louisiana, to have, as department commander, charge of several states in the Southwest."¹² He continued in this area for several years. In July 1843 (two years after the 1st Infantry had gone back to the Northwest and been divided between forts Crawford and Snelling and a few other posts) "General Taylor was transferred to the 6th Infantry; but kept on detached duty commanding 'Department No. 1'; and his headquarters, probably for the convenience of supply was established at New Orleans. This enabled him to inspect at will the scattered garrisons of Towson, Gibson, Jesup, Wood, Pike, Pickens, and others within his district, and also to spend part of the time on his estate near Baton Rouge."¹³

While yet at Jesup, a year before the outbreak of the Mexican War, General Taylor received

¹² Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹³ Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

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the following confidential communication from the Secretary of War.

Executive Document No. 60
(Confidential)

WAR DEPARTMENT, May 28, 1845

SIR: I am directed by the President to cause the forces now under your command, and those which may be assigned to it, to be put into a position where they may most promptly and efficiently act in defense of Texas, in the event it shall become necessary or proper to employ them for that purpose. The information received by the Executive of the United States warrants the belief that Texas will shortly accede to the terms of annexation. As soon as the Texas congress shall have given its consent to annexation, and a convention shall assemble and accept the terms offered in the resolutions of congress, Texas will then be regarded by the executive government here so far a part of the United States as to be entitled from this government to defense and protection from foreign invasion and Indian incursions. The troops under your command will be placed and kept in readiness to perform this duty.

In the letter addressed to you from the adjutant general's office, of the 21st of March, you were instructed to hold a portion of the troops under your immediate command in readiness to move into Texas under certain contingencies, and upon further orders from this department. In the treaty between the United States and Mexico, the two governments mutually stipulated to use all the means in their power to maintain peace and harmony among the Indian nations inhabiting the lands on their borders; and to restrain by force any hostilities and incursions by these nations within their respective boundaries, so that the one would not suffer the Indians within its limits to attack, in any manner whatever, the citizens of the other, or the Indians residing upon the

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territories of the other . . . The obligations which in this respect are due to Mexico by this treaty, are due also to Texas. Should the Indians residing within the limits of the United States, either by themselves, or associated with others, attempt any hostile movement in regard to Texas, it will be your duty to employ the troops under your command to repel and chastise them; and for this purpose you will give the necessary instructions to the military posts on the upper Red River, (although not under your immediate command), and, with the approbation of the Texan authorities, make such movements, and take such position, within the limits of Texas, as in your judgment may be necessary. You are also directed to open immediately correspondence with the authorities of Texas, and with any diplomatic agent of the United States . . . with a view to information and advice in respect to the common Indian enemy, as well as to any foreign power. This communication and consultation with the Texan authorities, etc., are directed with a view to enable you to avail yourself of the superior local knowledge they may possess, but not for the purpose of placing you, or any portion of the forces of the United States, under the orders of any functionary not in the regular line of command above you.

Should the territories of Texas be invaded by a foreign power, and you shall receive certain intelligence through her functionaries of that fact, after her convention shall have acceded to the terms of annexation contained in the resolutions of the Congress of the United States, you will at once employ, in the most effective manner your judgment may dictate, the forces under your command, for the defense of these territories, and to expel the invaders.

It is supposed here that, for the mere purpose of repelling a common Indian enemy, as above provided for, it may not be necessary that you should march across

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the Sabine or upper Red River with more than the particular troops which you were desired in the instructions before referred to, of the 21st March, to hold in immediate readiness for the field, but it is not intended to restrict you positively to that particular amount of force. On the contrary, according to the emergency, you may add any other corps, or any number of companies within your department, deemed necessary, beginning with those nearest at hand; and in the contingency of a *foreign* invasion of Texas, as above specified, other regiments from a distance may be ordered to report to you.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. L. MARCY
Secretary of war.

General Z. TAYLOR,
Fort Jesup, Louisiana

A careful reading of these instructions reveal that they in effect said: *When Texas becomes a part of the United States you will move in with your troops and defend it against Indian uprisings or foreign invasion. You will be accountable only to the Secretary of War and the President.* What was to constitute invasion, or the disputed boundary, or whether if invasion occurred he was to go into Mexico, what terms he should make with an enemy, whether he was to take over the government of Texas and everything else of a military, diplomatic or political nature was left to the judgment and discretion of the commander of the expedition.

In General Howard's book we find a summary of the points covered in Mr. Marcy's pri-

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vate instructions to Taylor: "To get as near Texas as he could while waiting for Texas' acceptance of our conditions of admission, to keep his troops in hand ready to cross the Texas line, 'to repel invasion whether of Mexicans or Indians', to call for volunteers should Mexico begin war, and to keep himself informed of Texas' action by holding communication with that Government at the town of Washington, Texas and with the Honorable A. J. Donelson, the United States agent resident there."¹⁴

The agent referred to in the above quotation wrote General Taylor the following letter:

Executive Document No. 60

Legation of the United States

Washington, Texas, June 28, 1845

General: I received, by Captain Waggaman, your letter and the accompanying documents, written for the purpose of acquainting me with your instructions, and of ascertaining what will be the probable necessity for the employment of the troops under your command within the limits of Texas.

Captain Waggaman will hand you a letter from the War Department of this government, containing an application for the immediate employment of the troops under your command in the western borders of Texas. He will also bring you other papers, showing that all the branches of this government have given their consent to the annexation of Texas to the United States, and that the consent of the convention, which is to assemble on the 4th of July, will be certainly given.

¹⁴ Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

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If any reliance is to be placed upon the threats of Mexico, and upon the advice which we may presume will be given by the British and French governments, an invasion of Texas may be confidently anticipated. At all events, it is so probable as to justify the removal of your force, without delay, to the western frontier of Texas, in order that you may be ready to give the protection which the President of the United States has felt himself authorized to offer.

I would advise you to send your dragoons over land, taking the most direct route for San Antonio, which is a healthy point, about one hundred and twenty miles from the gulf, abounding in good water, and surrounded by a country said to be in a good state of cultivation.

Your infantry I would advise to be furnished with transportation direct from New Orleans to Corpus Christi, as being the most certain and least expensive route. Corpus Christi is said to be as healthy as Pensacola, a convenient place for supplies, and is the most western point now occupied by Texas; another point between that and San Antonio, or further north than the latter, may be selected with still more advantage after you reach Corpus Christi.

I would by no means be understood as advising you to take an offensive attitude in regard to Mexico, without further orders from the government of the United States. The probability is, if Mexico undertakes the invasion, that she will attempt to drive you from the points suggested for your occupation. In that event, your right of defense will of course authorize you to cripple and destroy the Mexican army in the best way you can; but it should be distinctly understood that your action will be strictly defensive, and aimed at the protection of the rights of Texas.

The occupation of the country between the Nueces and Rio Grande, you are aware, is a disputed question.

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Texas holds Corpus Christi; Mexico, Santiago, near the mouth of the Rio Grande.

The threatened invasion of Texas, however, by Mexico, is founded upon the assumption that Texas has no territory independent of Mexico.

You can safely hold possession of Corpus Christi, and all other points up the Nueces; and, if Mexico attempts to dislodge you, drive her beyond the Rio Grande.

I will send you an express as soon as I am in possession of the vote of the convention accepting the terms offered by the United States for the admission of Texas into the Union. I will also, at the same time, send, by the way of Galveston, the same information to the President of the United States.

I regret to inform you that my health is so much prostrated by an attack of fever, that I am not able to give you a more full account of the state of things here. I avail myself of the kind services of Captain Waggoner, to whom I have dictated this communication.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. J. DONELSON.

Brigadier General Taylor

Commanding General, Fort Jesup.

The most interesting part of this communication is the sixth paragraph, which shows that the diplomatic representative (and probably also the Texas authorities) were but partially informed of the government's intentions and its instructions to General Taylor, who had been told neither he nor any portion of his command were "under the orders of any functionary not in the regular line of command above you," and again "you will, at once, em-

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ploy in the most effective manner your judgment may dictate the forces under your command."

In the meantime Taylor received another confidential letter from Washington. This was dated June 15th, and was from the Honorable George Bancroft, Secretary of the Navy, and acting Secretary of War. It will be noted that while Diplomatic Representative Donelson definitely regarded the Nueces as the limit beyond which Taylor should not go, the latter's confidential instructions placed no limit on his advance and suggested the Rio Grande as the boundary he should defend if in his judgment that were feasible.

WAR DEPARTMENT, June 15, 1845

SIR: On the 4th day of July next, or very soon thereafter, the convention of the people of Texas will probably accept the proposition of annexation, under the joint resolutions of the late Congress of the United States. That acceptance will constitute Texas an integral portion of our country.

In anticipation of that event, you will forthwith make a forward movement with the troops under your command, and advance to the mouth of the Sabine, or to such other point on the gulf of Mexico, or its navigable waters, as in your judgment may be most convenient for an embarkation at the proper time for the western frontier of Texas.

In leaving to your judgment to decide the route, it is intended that you choose the most expeditious, having due regard to the health and efficiency of the troops, on reaching the point of destination.

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The force under your immediate command, at and near Fort Jesup, to be put in motion on the receipt of these instructions, will be the 3rd and 4th regiments of infantry, and seven companies of the 2nd regiment of dragoons. The two absent companies of the 4th infantry have been ordered to join their regiments. Artillery will be ordered from New Orleans.

It is understood that suitable forage for cavalry cannot be obtained in the region which the troops are to occupy; if this be so, the dragoons must leave their horses and serve as riflemen. But it is possible that horses of the country, accustomed to subsist on meagre forage, may be procured, if it be found necessary. You will therefore take the precaution to order a portion of the cavalry equipments to accompany the regiment, with a view to mounted service.

The point of your ultimate destination is the western frontier of Texas, where you will select and occupy, on or near the Rio Grande del Norte, such a site as will consist with the health of the troops, and will be best adapted to repel invasion, and to protect what, in the event of annexation, will be our western border. You will limit yourself to the defense of the territory of Texas, unless Mexico should declare war against the United States.

Your movement to the gulf of Mexico, and your preparations to embark for the western frontier of Texas, are to be made without any delay; but you will not effect a landing on that frontier until you have yourself ascertained the due acceptance of Texas of the proffered terms of annexation, or until you receive directions from Mr. Donelson.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEORGE BANCROFT.

To Brigadier General Z. TAYLOR,
U. S. Army, com'g 1st dep't, Fort Jesup, La.

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It appears that the date on which the people of Texas would accede to the union and thus become *de facto* and *de jure* one of the United States had been set in advance. In the light of this Taylor was directed to march to the mouth of the Sabine River, "or such other point on the Gulf of Mexico, or its navigable waters as in your judgment may be most convenient for an embarkation at the proper time for the western frontier of Texas."¹⁵ However, the most important part of the letter, so far as it concerns this monograph, is that it contained the inception of what was later to be known as Fort Brown: "The point of your ultimate destination is the western frontier of Texas, where you will select and occupy, on or near the Rio Grande del Norte, such a site as will consist with the health of the troops, and what will be best adapted to repel invasion, and to protect what, in the event of annexation, will be our western border." Taylor was forbidden to cross the Rio Grande unless Mexico should declare war against the United States. Subsequent events showed that as Taylor interpreted his mission, crossing the Rio Grande incident to repelling invasion was not precluded by these instructions.

It is also obvious that not withstanding the boundary between Texas and Mexico was in

¹⁵ Executive Document 60.

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dispute, the administration at Washington had no intention of recognizing other than the Rio Grande as the boundary, and had fully decided to maintain its position by force of arms if necessary.

Shortly after receiving the foregoing letter, General Taylor received another set of instructions, dated July 8, 1845, a reiteration of the order contained above. His acknowledgment was stated in the following letter:

Headquarters First Military Depot
New Orleans, La.,
July 20, 1845.

Sir: I respectfully acknowledge your communication of July 8, conveying the instructions of the Secretary of War, relative to the Mexican settlements on this side of the Rio Grande. These instructions will be closely obeyed; and the department may rest assured that I will take no step to interrupt the friendly relations between the United States and Mexico. I am gratified at receiving these instructions, as they confirm my views, previously communicated, in regard to the proper line to be occupied at present by our troops.

I am respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,
Brevet Brigadier-General U. S. A.,
Commanding

To the Adjutant General of the Army
Washington, D. C.

The nature of Taylor's plans and activities at Fort Jesup in preparation of departure for New Orleans is indicated in the following quo-

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tations from his letters of June 18th and 30th, and July 8th, 1845:

I would respectfully state, that I deem the present positions of the troops under my orders as being the best at this time, or until we shall ascertain more certainly the nature of the service which they may be called upon to perform on first entering Texas. Should I receive authentic information from the government of Texas or our charge, after the favorable action of the convention on the resolutions of annexation, that the country is threatened with invasion, I shall without further delay, move the 3rd and 4th regiments of infantry, and probably some companies of the 7th, by water, to some point on the coast whence they may readily take up suitable positions to repel or hold in check the invading force. The cavalry would move by land. For the particular service of repelling invasion, the water route is not only the most economical and expeditious, but presents the great advantage of throwing the troops into position in a fresh condition, fit for immediate service. It may not, however, be advisable to adopt that route after the sickly season shall commence in New Orleans.

The infantry regiments will be put in motion immediately for New Orleans or its vicinity, by way of Red River. This route is, beyond all question, the best for the purposes indicated in the instructions. The 4th infantry will embark by the 4th, and the 3rd by the 8th of July. I am yet undecided as to the best route for the cavalry, and shall wait for information to be procured by Captain Waggaman, from whom I expect to hear daily. I incline, at present, to the opinion, that the dragoons can move by land to the western part of Texas, and can be foraged there. We shall need the services of mounted troops on our arrival, and the dragoons are already so well instructed, and their horses

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in such training, that I deem it all important, if practicable, to retain them as a mounted force. This will be decided before my own departure for New Orleans on the 8th of July, and the department shall be duly advised accordingly.

I propose to concentrate all my force at or near Corpus Christi, until the disposition of Mexico shall become known. Should the Mexican troops on the Rio Grande assume a hostile attitude, it will be necessary to have all the corps within striking distance of each other, to be ready for any emergency. Should our relation with them on the other hand be pacific, a portion of the command can then be extended towards San Antonio. I have, accordingly, given the cavalry a route overland hence to Corpus Christi. If I receive information, on reaching the latter point, rendering it necessary, there will be ample time, by express to change their route. I shall order three months' forage to meet the dragoons at Corpus Christi.

Major Donelson's communication confirms me in the resolution of sending the dragoons by land. That corps is in an excellent state of instruction, and has made remarkable progress in recruiting and training its horses.

A second quotation from Taylor's letter of July 8th gives us a picture of the embarkation of troops from Jesup to New Orleans, plus further mention of plans.

The 4th infantry embarked for New Orleans on the 3rd instant. The 3rd marched yesterday, and will embark at Grand Ecore today. I shall leave tomorrow, and expect to reach New Orleans by the 12th. In view of the sickly season being at hand, I shall not consider it necessary to wait for information in regard to the action of the convention, particularly since receiving the communication of Major Donelson. I hope to em-

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bark with the brigade of infantry as early as the 16th instant, and expect to reach Corpus Christi in four days.

As early as May 17, 1845 Henry Stanton, the Assistant Quartermaster General at Washington, wrote the following letter regarding transportation and supplies for the forces which were to be dispatched to the Rio Grande. Correspondence emanating from the Quartermaster General's Office was rather prolific on these important matters, and continued all summer and fall of that year.

Executive Document No. 119

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington City, May 17, 1845.

GENERAL: Upon the supposition that, in the event of any important movement of the troops under your command, additional means of transportation might be required, I directed, some weeks since, the construction at Philadelphia of thirty four-horse wagons, and sixty sets of double wagon harness (thirty for wheel and thirty for lead), one-third the number for mules. These wagons and sets of harness have been reported ready for shipment, and I have this day directed that they be shipped to the care of Major McRee, quartermaster at New Orleans, who has been instructed to hold them subject to such further disposition as you may think proper to indicate.

HENRY STANTON,

Assistant Quartermaster General

To Brigadier General Z. TAYLOR,

U. S. A., Fort Jesup, Louisiana.

The first communication mentioning General Taylor as commanding the *Army of Oc-*

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cupation (Howard says that Taylor himself gave this name to his forces) was written by Mr. Marcy, and dated Washington, July 30, 1845. It is quoted as follows:

Executive Document No. 60

WAR DEPARTMENT

Washington, July 30, 1845

SIR: Your letter from New Orleans, of the 20th instant, addressed to the adjutant general, has been received and laid before the President, and he desires me to express to you his approval of your movements.

He has not the requisite information in regard to the country to enable him to give any positive directions as to the position you ought to take, or the movements which it may be expedient to make; these must be governed by circumstances. While avoiding, as you have been instructed to do, all aggressive measures toward Mexico, as long as the relations of peace exists between that republic and the United States, you are expected to occupy, protect and defend, the territory of Texas to the extent that it has been occupied by the people of Texas. The Rio Grande is claimed to be the boundary between the two countries, and up to this boundary you are to extend your protection, only excepting any posts on the eastern side thereof which are in the actual occupancy of Mexican forces, or Mexican settlements, over which the republic of Texas did not exercise jurisdiction at the period of annexation, or shortly before that event. It is expected that, in selecting the establishment for your troops, you will approach as near the boundary line—the Rio Grande—as prudence will dictate. With this view the President desires that your position, for the part of your forces at least, should be west of the river Nueces.

You are directed to ascertain and communicate to this department the number of Mexican troops now at

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Matamoros, and the other Mexican posts along the border, their position, the condition of them, and particularly the measures taken or contemplated to increase or strengthen them. If you should have any reason to believe that the government of Mexico is concentrating forces on the boundaries of the two countries, you will not only act with reference to such a state of things, but give the earliest information to this department.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. L. MARCY,

Secretary of War.

Brigadier General Z. TAYLOR,

Commanding the army of occupation in Texas.

It must be kept in mind that back in those days military intelligence was by no means comparable to what it is today. We find, for example, the Secretary of War (War Department, July 8, 1845) advising Taylor of information received in Washington concerning the location of some Mexican "military establishments on the east side of the Rio Grande, which are, and for some time have been, in the actual occupancy of her troops."¹⁶ In a communication dated July 30, 1845, Marcy directs Taylor to "ascertain and communicate to this department the number of Mexican troops now at Matamoros, and the other Mexican posts along the border, their position, the condition of them, and particularly the measures taken or contemplated to increase or

¹⁶ Executive Document 60.

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strengthen them.”¹⁷ These excerpts simply serve to indicate how meagre was the knowledge of conditions, locations, etc., a hundred years ago. Such an inadequate intelligence service is scarcely conceivable today.

By this time Taylor was enroute to St Joseph's Island, having departed from New Orleans with eight companies of the 3rd Infantry. By this time also he had received definite word concerning the action of the Texas Convention at Austin. "In twenty days he had sufficiently reconnoitered the coast and had moved up to Corpus Christi; he had just received the news that Mexico had taken 'the preparatory steps' toward a declaration of war against the United States; he gave the report of General Arista's intended move from Monterrey forward to Matamoros, August 4, with fifteen hundred men, five hundred being cavalry: but did not hear that an invasion of Texas was yet contemplated More troops soon followed the 3rd Infantry to Corpus Christi, among them the 4th, 5th and 8th Infantry, and considerable artillery, besides the Louisiana volunteers.”¹⁸

General Taylor arrived at St. Joseph's Island July 25th, 1845. He arrived at Corpus Christi August 15th. Lieutenant Ringgold arrived

¹⁷ Executive Document 60.

¹⁸ Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 87 and 88.

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August 25th. On August 30th came several companies of the 7th Infantry, commanded by Major Jacob Brown. On that same day Major Gally reported with two companies of volunteer artillery. On October 9th five companies of the 5th Infantry arrived under Lieutenant-Colonel McIntosh. By establishing his camp on the south shore of Corpus Christi Bay he complied with the presidential injunction to place at least part of his forces west [south] of the Nueces, i.e. in the disputed territory.

A letter from R. Jones, Adjutant General in Washington, indicates that Taylor was to have been forwarded more troops, most likely those referred to above. Perhaps also "two squadrons of the 2nd Regiment of Dragoons, who were approaching Corpus Christi They, under the famous Colonel Twiggs, had marched from Fort Jesup, Louisiana, to Corpus Christi in thirty-two days, resting eight days en route. The distance in a straight line is about four hundred miles, but the Dragoons by the routes they took made at least five hundred."¹⁹

On August 27th Colonel Twiggs' troops arrived. Arrangement of organizations at the camp was as follows: "The Louisiana volunteers had the left of this charming camp, Twiggs with his dragoons the right, while the center was filled by the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, and

¹⁹ Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

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8th Regiments of United States Infantry, and a battalion of artillery troops equipped as infantry Here, then, at Corpus Christi, the little army of occupation, perhaps all told three thousand souls, remained till March 8, 1846."²⁰

²⁰ Howard, op. cit., p. 89.

Chapter IV

Corpus Christi

WHILE STATIONED at Corpus Christi, General Taylor despatched several reconnoitering parties. Perhaps the most important of these was an expedition to the Rio Grande, for the purpose of observation, and selection of some favorable position as a depot of military supplies, as well as a suitable place for encampment of the army should it be moved in that direction. This party, returning on February 24th, 1846, "reported in favor of Point Isabel, a few miles from the mouth of the Rio Grande, as a depot of provisions and military stores, and in favor of the position where Fort Brown was subsequently built, as a suitable position to be occupied by the army."²¹

Another, and smaller reconnaissance is des-

²¹ Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

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cribed by Lieutenant (later General) Meade in a letter to his wife:

"Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade," page 27

Headquarters Army of Occupation

Corpus Christi, Texas, October 9, 1845

I believe I have never yet given you any account of our expedition up the river Nueces, from which we have returned about a week, and on which we were absent some thirteen days

General Taylor, being desirous of obtaining information concerning the country lying adjacent to the river Nueces, and through which his army will have to operate, in the event of an advanced movement taking place, ordered a reconnaissance to be made by Captain Cram and party, to be escorted by thirty infantry soldiers, commanded by two officers. We left here early one morning in five Mackinaw boats, and proceeded up a large bay into which the Nueces flows, and went to the head in search of the river. Being totally ignorant of the country, we missed the mouth of the river, and the first night out was spent by some of the gentlemen in their boats; but I was lucky in finding a good place ashore to camp, where, being joined by one of the boats loaded with provisions, I pitched my tent, had a good supper that night, and breakfast next morning. The next day we made another ineffectual attempt to ascend the river, and got into a bayou, which led us into lakes, and then into other bayous, till, finally, we reached a lake having so little water that we could advance no farther. Under these circumstances we encamped for the night, and the next morning early, I was sent out with four men to explore the country around, and ascertain if the river was in our neighborhood. A few miles traveling brought me to the stream which debouched into the bay, about its middle, instead of its head. I returned, set the party on the right road, which obliged

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us to retrace our steps, and the third day out we encamped on the banks of the Nueces. After getting into the river we had comparatively easy work. We ordinarily arose at daybreak, had breakfast, took down our tents, loaded the boats, and by seven o'clock were en route. Then, about one o'clock, we stopped and had a little lunch and at 4 P. M. we stopped for the day, unloaded, and had camp pitched, and supper ready by sundown. During the day, and after we halted, some of the men would take their muskets and go along the banks and were always sure to bring us in some wild turkeys, very delicious birds. We saw plenty of deer, but were not fortunate enough to get any venison. Indeed, you would be surprised to learn that the country is very difficult to travel through. It is nearly all prairie, but having a most luxurious growth of long grass, as high as a man almost, which breaks you down in marching through it, so that starting a deer or other animal it is impossible to overtake him unless you are mounted on a horse. The roads, too, through the country, are rendered impassable by a heavy rain; the soil is so soft they become boggy after a few hours, so that traveling, and particularly marching large bodies of men, will be a very difficult operation. It took us some four days to ascend the river, when we arrived at what was once the town of San Patricio, now entirely in ruins and deserted. This place was settled by almost three hundred Irish immigrants under the protection of the Mexican Government; but, during the war that devastated this country, it was a prey to both parties, and now there is not one stone standing on another, and no traces of a settlement except some cultivated ground. We stayed at this place two days, and arrived three days afterwards here, at the main camp, in fine health, all of us improved by the trip, except Mr. Wood, our young Topographical Sub, who was obliged to return the second day of the expedition, from illness but soon recovered here. You

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may imagine how healthy a place this is, when we have, collected here, nearly four thousand men who have come from all parts of the country, and many from the upper Lakes, nearly all passing through New Orleans, and many detained there, and yet until this time there have been only two or three deaths from disease, though there have been several from accidents, such as blowing up of steamboats, strokes of lightning, drowning, etc. Nearly all have been affected by the diarrhoea consequent upon the change of life and water, but these cases have all been mild, though many of the men are drunken, dissipated fellows who, you would suppose, would be carried off by any disease. We have here a fine breeze blowing constantly, which tempers the ardor of the sun; but at this season the sun begins to lose its powerful effect, and the middle of the day is the most agreeable part of it.

As noted in the above letter, Lieutenant Meade refers to the climate and conditions of the troops of an occasional expedition. Further comments on these topics are noted in later letters:

November 3, 1845 The orders have been received from Washington to put the troops in as comfortable winter quarters as can be made, and the only excitement now is, whether this will be done here, or whether we shall be dispersed over the country in places where there is more timber and better water. That the army is not to be recalled this winter is, however, certain; but for what purposes we are kept here, or how long our stay will be, is still indefinite

November 3, 1845 In one point of view my position is of advantage to me, as it enables me to make the acquaintance of nearly two-thirds of the officers of the army, and you would be surprised how many there

Corpus Christi

are highly educated and refined gentlemen among them. I do not believe any army in the world can compare with them in this respect. I have seen nothing like dissipation, except in some very few instances; but there will be black sheep in every flock, and I have been most gratified to find such a state of high-toned gentlemanly feeling, so much intelligence and refinement, among a body of men the larger proportion of whom have been in the western wilds for years.

December 1, 1845 My last letter to you was dated on the 12th ult., just on the eve of my departure on an expedition down the Laguna Madre. I was out some ten days, and since my return have been so much occupied with preparing the drawings and the reports, that I believe I have allowed an opportunity to write you to escape me.

We had very bad weather upon our expedition, and I was much exposed. Upon two separate occasions my tent was blown over my head, and I wet through and through. Indeed, I returned much the worse for my exposure, having become quite bilious and slightly jaundiced. The weather has been extremely cold, and the high winds that constantly prevail here prevent you from getting your tent comfortable. Indeed in all my experience of field service, I have never been so comfortless as now. I feel the cold here more than in Maine, because there we had no wind, and plenty of fuel, and could encamp in the woods. Here it is all open beach, where the wind sweeps in gales day and night, and there is barely wood sufficient for cooking purposes, to be procured. It is a fine climate in summer, when the wind tempers the burning rays of the sun, but now, when the winds are from the north, and cutting cold, it is the most disagreeable and trying I was ever in. I shall consider myself lucky if I can get out of it without rheumatism or some such pleasant remembrance of it. December 9, 1845 I wrote my last letter to you

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on the 1st inst. I am sorry to say I have been quite unwell in the meantime, having suffered from a regular attack of jaundice. I have been as yellow as an orange, and although not sick enough to keep me in bed, yet I have felt very badly, and have been under the influence of medicine all the time. You cannot imagine the total want of comfort which one is subjected to here. It has been storming and raining incessantly for the last three weeks, and when one is taking medicine it is not very agreeable accompaniment to be sleeping in wet tents

Lieutenant Meade's comments on the weather are similar to those found in such works as that of Smith:

Taylor, accustomed to frontier conditions, described his troops as healthy, remarkably well-behaved and very comfortable. But in reality, the tents could scarcely keep out a heavy dew; for weeks together every article in many of them was thoroughly soaked; and much of the time water stood three or four feet deep in some. The weather oscillated sharply between sultry heat and piercing northerers, so that one lay down gasping for breath and woke up freezing. As hardly enough wood could be obtained for the cooks, camp-fires were usually out of the question; and only brackish drinking water could be had. At one time nearly twenty per cent of the men were on the sick list, and half of the others more or less ill. Taylor knew so little of military evolutions that he could not get his men properly into line, and few of his chief officers excelled him very much. Despite orders from the President, military exercises were given up after a time; a sullen torpor and silence reigned in the camp, and many deserted."²²

²² Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

Corpus Christi

One can well doubt that Smith rightly divined Taylor's reason for spending a winter in a camp so inconvenient and insalubrious, or that simply because he was inured to hardship himself he subjected his troops to hardship and discomfort to a degree which went far to destroy their morale. A more likely reason resides in his lack of knowledge about the disposition of enemy organizations and enemy intentions, in other words was due to lack of military intelligence which has already been referred to and which figured largely in the campaign of the following summer.

During the sojourn at Corpus Christi no one except possibly General Taylor seemed to think that war was, or would become, imminent between the United States and Mexico. This is very apparent in Lieutenant Meade's letters, as well as in other reports. For example, on October 16, 1845, Secretary of War Marcy penned General Taylor that no apprehension was felt at Washington. In the same letter, however, Marcy for the second time, mentioned "the contingency of your selecting, or being directed to take, a position on the banks of the Rio Grande near its mouth or places above."²³

In addition to the poor housing and sickness experienced while the troops were at Corpus Christi, there are several reflections on condi-

²³ Executive Document 60.

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tions there which should not be passed without mention. In spite of the expedition of several reconnoitering parties, Taylor's intelligence was, in the main, very limited. Again and again, he wrote the Adjutant General in Washington "no news from the Rio Grande." Sometimes he would add "except what we read in the New Orleans papers." Both Colonel Cross and Lieutenant Meade mentioned the lack of intelligence in their letters. In Marcy's letter of March 2, 1846, he advised Taylor to use all means at his disposal to acquire information regarding military movements in Mexico and to ascertain the disposition of the people.

Many items of interest, official and otherwise, may be gleaned from the correspondence between Taylor and the authorities in Washington while the troops were at Corpus Christi.

From Taylor's letter of August 26th, we gather that the false rumors circulating about the camp caused considerable anxiety.

In the same letter we read of the arrival of two companies of volunteer artillerists, which had been mustered by General Gaines in New Orleans. This was one of the many foolish accomplishments of Gaines, who, in his abnormal zeal and mental aberration, frequently embarrassed the War Department. He was eventually relieved from his assignment. Taylor wrote Washington that he had no use for these troops.

Now and then Taylor received word from

Corpus Christi

Mexico relative to the movement of its forces. Taylor's letter of September 14th reports Arista at Mier without any force; while his letter of November 7th, in referring to communication from Commodore Connor, dated October 24th, reported Arista's officers as returning to Mexico City in poverty.

Letter after letter states "no news from the Rio Grande."

The letter of October 15th gives the total strength in the areas as 3,860.

The chapter dealing with the sojourn at Corpus Christi should not be closed without mention of Taylor's communications with Commodore Connor, commanding the Home Squadron. Taylor's letter of February 16th mentioned receipt of a communication from Connor in which cooperation with the land forces was offered. Later Connor was of material assistance, especially in guarding Taylor's supplies at Point Isabel.

February 4, 1846 Taylor acknowledged receipt of communications from the Secretary of War containing instructions of the President relative to moving forward to the Rio Grande. We get an idea of the grand scale of the move from Colonel Cross' letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Hunt at New Orleans, when he stated that "1900 horses and mules will move with the army—almost one quadruped for one man."

Everyone in Taylor's army was most happy

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to leave Corpus Christi, but the townspeople were highly disgruntled. Lieutenant Meade's description of their attitude is pertinent.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF GEORGE GORDON MEADE

VOL. I

March 2, 1846

It appears General Taylor has received positive orders from Washington to march, and he is to take up a position on the river, immediately opposite Matamoros. The good people of Corpus Christi, who have been living on us as did the flies on the fox in the fable, and who see in our departure the total breaking up of their place, have been making the most gigantic efforts to frighten the General from going, on the plea of there being a very large Mexican force ready to oppose him; but General Taylor is not to be turned in this way from a matter of duty, and he told them if there were fifty-thousand Mexicans he would try his best to get there. These reports of Mexican forces, all exaggerated, and most of them coined here, will doubtless find their way into the Northern papers, but you must not mind them, and give credence to nothing but what you get from me.

This letter in itself is another commentary on the meagre information of the enemy available to the Army Commander even after he had been camped for several months within less than 200 miles of the headquarters (Matamoros) of the Mexican force supposedly assembled for the invasion.

Accompanying Marcy's third mention of a plan to establish the fortification, which later

Corpus Christi

became Fort Brown, were orders to depart Corpus Christi and march to the Rio Grande (dated Washington, January 13, 1846).²⁴

These instructions were acknowledged by General Taylor in a letter dated at Corpus Christi, February 4, 1846.

²⁴ Executive Document 60.

Chapter V

To Point Isabel and the Rio Grande

MARCH 8, 1846
the Army of Occupation left Corpus Christi for the Rio Grande. An excerpt from General Taylor's letter describing the departure follows:

Executive Document No. 60

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION,

Corpus Christi, Texas, March 8, 1846.

SIR: I respectfully report that the advance of the army, composed of the cavalry and Major Ringgold's light artillery, the whole under the command of Colonel Twiggs, took up the line of march this morning, in the direction of Matamoros; its strength being 23 officers, and 378 men. The advance will be followed in succession by the brigades of infantry, the last brigade marching on the 11th instant. The roads are in good order, the weather fine, and the troops in excellent condition for service

Z. TAYLOR,

Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A., comd'g.

THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

Of the Army, Washington, D. C.

To Point Isabel and the Rio Grande

Two routes were open to the Army in its march to the Rio Grande, one via Padre Island, which had been explored by Captain Hardee. The other route, the one chosen, was via the mainland.

Perhaps Taylor's earliest letter after leaving Corpus Christi was the one written at Camp Los Pintos, 31 miles south of the point of departure, and dated March 12, 1846. In this he reported the columns advancing with great regularity.

Taylor's next letter was written at camp at El Rause, 119 miles from Corpus Christi, March 18, 1846; the Cavalry and the 1st Brigade of Infantry having advanced to this point. All the units of the army were reported to be in "fine condition and spirits." Small bands of armed Mexicans had been met, but they seemed disposed to avoid the American forces, their mission probably being that of procuring information.

Undoubtedly the most thrilling experience of the journey from Corpus Christi to Point Isabel was the crossing of the Arroyo Colorado. Here a party of Mexicans threatened the troops' passage over the stream. In order to create the impression of a sizeable army, bugles were blown all up and down the stream, which was screened with thick chaparral. At length the American army, including the artillery, was drawn up in battle array, but the small party of

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Mexicans fled. Taylor's detailed account of the crossing is interesting.

Executive Document No. 60

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION,
Camp 3 miles south of the Arroyo Colorado, March
21, 1846.

SIR: I respectfully report that my forces are now concentrated at this point, the 3rd brigade having joined me today. We are nearly north of Matamoros, and about 30 miles distant.

The Arroyo Colorado is a salt river, or rather lagoon, nearly one hundred yards broad, and so deep as barely to be fordable. It would have formed a serious obstruction to our march had the enemy chosen to occupy its right bank, even with a small force. On the 19th, the advanced corps encamped within three miles of the ford, and a reconnaissance (rancheros) was discovered on the opposite bank, but threw no obstacle in the way of examining the ford. They, however, signified to the officer charged with the reconnaissance that it would be considered an act of hostility if we attempted to pass the river, and that we should, in that case, be treated as enemies. Under these circumstances, not knowing the amount of force that might be on the other bank, I deemed it prudent to make dispositions to pass the river under fire, for which please see my "orders," No. 33. At an early hour of the 20th, the cavalry and 1st brigade of infantry were in position at the ford, the batteries of field artillery being so placed as to sweep the opposite bank. While these dispositions were in progress, the party that had shown themselves the day before again made their appearance. I sent Captain Mansfield to communicate with the officer in command, who said that he had positive orders to fire upon us if we attempted to cross the river. Another party then made its appearance, and passed the river to communi-

To Point Isabel and the Rio Grande

cate with me. One of them (who was represented as the adjutant general of the Mexican troops) repeated substantially what had been said before, viz: that they had peremptory orders to fire upon us, and that it would be considered a declaration of war if we passed the river. He placed in my hands, at the same time, a proclamation of General Mejia, issued at Matamoros a day or two previous, which I enclose. I informed the officer that I should immediately cross the river, and if any of his party showed themselves on the other bank after the passage commenced, they would receive the fire of our artillery. In the meantime, the 2nd brigade (which had encamped some miles in my rear) came up and formed on the extreme right. The crossing was then commenced and executed in the order prescribed. Not a shot was fired; and a reconnoissance of cavalry, sent immediately forward, discovered the party which had occupied the bank retreating in the direction of Matamoros. Agreeable to my orders, they were not molested. The cavalry and 1st and 2nd brigades of infantry, with a train of two hundred wagons, crossed over and encamped at this point, three miles distant, at an early hour in the afternoon.

I have thought proper to make a detailed report of this operation, as being the first occasion on which the Mexicans have shown themselves in an attitude decidedly hostile. It has also furnished an excellent opportunity for the instruction of the troops, and for displaying their discipline and spirit, which, I am gratified to be able to say, were everything that could be desired.

I am compelled to remain at this point until joined by the supply train of the 3rd brigade, which is unavoidably in the rear. On the 23rd, at latest, I expect to resume the march, but am not fully decided as to the direction. While Matamoros is the point to be ultimately attained, it is necessary, at the same time, to

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cover our supplies, which will arrive soon at Point Isabel.

From the best information I am able to obtain, the enemy is not in force on this side of the Rio Grande. A few *rancheros* are still on the route hence to Matamoros. It is believed that there may be nearly 2,000 troops in that place, but what proportion of regular troops I cannot state with confidence. The arrival of General Ampudia is expected from the interior, but the accounts I receive of his movements are quite contradictory.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,

Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A., commanding.

The ADJUTANT GENERAL of the Army,
Washington, D. C.

The army was now in the country of resacas. The men and horses were undoubtedly within the sight and smell of the water, but annoyed at the greatly increased number of rattlesnakes. However, the plentiful deer and duck, after months on salt meat and fish, probably reconciled the men to the snakes.

Apparently Taylor had originally planned to go directly to the Rio Grande, but decided to avert his course slightly to go by Point Isabel, where he contemplated establishing a depot for his military stores. This change was precipitated after hearing that the place was occupied by Mexican troops. Although it proved to be a false report, he proceeded there anyway, with the dragoons and train, after leaving other units in halt on the Matamoros road, which connect-

To Point Isabel and the Rio Grande

ed that city and the Frontone (a name given Point Isabel by the Mexicans), and dispatching General A. L. Worth to advance with the infantry brigades to a suitable place of encampment.

As Taylor approached Point Isabel he was met by "a deputation of citizens, at the head of which was the Prefect of the State of Tamaulipas, to protest against his occupation of the country. The general, who had now become quite accustomed to Mexican *Pronunciamentos*, would most likely have dismissed the deputation without a reply, but upon the instant, discovering the smoke of what he judged to be the firing of the houses at Point Isabel, he told the Prefect that he would give him an answer when opposite Matamoros on the 28th. General Taylor then ordered forward the dragoons under Colonel Twiggs, to stop, if possible, the conflagration, and arrest the authors of it. Steamboats with 'supplies for the army' arrived at Point Isabel almost at the same instant with General Taylor" (Thorpe, p. 15).

Taylor's army reached "a point on the route from Matamoros to Point Isabel, eighteen miles from the former and ten miles from the latter place" March 24th. The remainder of his letter of March 25th, written from Point Isabel, is indicative of the general situation there.

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION,
Point Isabel, March 25, 1846.

SIR: I respectfully report that I marched on the

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morning of the 23rd instant with the entire army, from the camp near the Colorado, in the order prescribed in my order No. 35, herewith enclosed. After a march of fifteen miles, we reached, on the morning of the 24th, a point on the route from Matamoros to Point Isabel, eighteen miles from the former and ten from the latter place. I here left the infantry brigades under Brigadier General Worth, with instructions to proceed in the direction of Matamoros until he came to a suitable position for encampment, where he would halt, holding the route in observation, while I proceeded with the cavalry to this point to communicate with our transports, supposed to have arrived in the harbor, and make the necessary arrangements for the establishment and defense of a depot.

While on my way hither, our column was approached by a party on its right flank, bearing a white flag. It proved to be a civil deputation from Matamoros, desiring an interview with me. I informed them that I would halt at the first suitable place on the road and afford them the desired interview. It was, however, found necessary, from the want of water, to continue the route to this place. The deputation halted while yet some miles from Point Isabel, declining to come further, and sent me a formal protest of the prefect of the northern district of Tamaulipas against our occupation of the country, which I enclose herewith. At this moment, it was discovered that the buildings at Point Isabel were in flames. I then informed the bearer of the protest that I would answer it when opposite Matamoros, and dismissed the deputation. I considered the conflagration before my eyes as a decided evidence of hostility, and was not willing to be trifled with any longer, particularly as I had reason to believe that the prefect, in making this protest, was but a tool of the military authorities at Matamoros.

The advance of the cavalry fortunately arrived here

To Point Isabel and the Rio Grande

in season to arrest the fire, which consumed but three or four houses. The port captain, who committed the act under the orders, it is said of General Mejia, had made his escape before its arrival. We found two or three inoffensive Mexicans here, the rest having left for Matamoros.

I was gratified to find that the water expedition had exactly answered to our land movement. The steamers arriving in the harbor only two or three hours before we reached Point Isabel, with the other transports close in the rear. The *Porpoise* and *Lawrence*, brigs-of-war, and cutter *Woodbury*, are lying outside. I have thought it necessary to order Captain Porter's company to this place to reinforce Major Munroe. Our great depot must be here, and it is very important to secure it against any enterprise of the enemy. The engineer officers are now examining the ground with a view to tracing lines of defense and strengthening the position.

As soon as a sufficient amount of supplies can be thrown forward toward Matamoros, I shall march in the direction of that town and occupy a position as near it as circumstances will permit.

I enclose a sketch prepared by my aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Eaton, exhibiting the route of march since leaving the Colorado, and the bearings of important points.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR

Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A. Army, commanding.

The ADJUTANT GENERAL of the Army,
Washington, D. C.

March 29th General Taylor wrote from "Camp Opposite Matamoros," reporting his arrival as of the previous day. An extract from this letter pictures the conditions and environment that prevailed.

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(Extract)

CAMP ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE RIO GRANDE,

Opposite Matamoros, March 29, 1846.

SIR: I have the honor to report that I arrived at this camp yesterday with the forces under my command, no resistance having been offered to my advance to the banks of the river, nor any act of hostility committed by the Mexicans, except the capture of two of our dragoons, sent forward from the advance guard. I deem it possible that these two men may have deserted to the enemy, as one of them, at least, bears a bad character. Our approach seems to have created much excitement in Matamoros, and a great deal of activity has been displayed since our arrival in the preparation of batteries. The left bank is now under reconnaissance of our engineer officers, and I shall lose no time in strengthening our position by such defensive works as may be necessary, employing for that purpose a portion of the heavy guns brought round by sea.

The attitude of the Mexicans is, so far, decidedly hostile. An interview has been held, by my direction, with the military authorities in Matamoros, but with no satisfactory result.

Under this state of things, I must again and urgently call your attention to the necessity of speedily sending recruits to this army.

The militia of Texas are so remote from the border that we cannot depend upon their aid.

The strength gained by filling up the regiments here, even to the present feeble establishment, would be of very great importance.

I respectfully enclose a field report of the force now in this camp.

To Point Isabel and the Rio Grande

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,

Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A., commanding.

The ADJUTANT GENERAL of the Army,
Washington, D. C.

Chapter VI

Preparations in Mexico

DURING THE TIME that American forces were training at Corpus Christi, the Mexicans were by no means idle. The Texas annexation had been strongly protested and the Mexican Minister in Washington, General Almonte, had demanded his passports and left the United States, thereby severing diplomatic relations between the two countries. An increase in the regular army was ordered, bringing the total strength to sixty thousand. The two thousand troops at Matamoros were, in April, augmented by 2200 more, including 200 cavalry.²⁵

On December 29, 1845, General Paredes became President of the Mexican Republic, having overthrown Herrera and his administration.

²⁵ Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

Preparations in Mexico

This new power was definitely against negotiations with the United States, and his highly successful revolution was rapidly destroying all hope for peace between the two countries. Paredes issued a proclamation of Defensive War on April 23, 1846; not without some reason, as the extracts listed will show.

The ancient injuries and the attacks, which ever since the year 1836 the Government of the United States has incessantly inflicted upon the people of Mexico, have been crowned by the insult of sending us a Minister who is accredited to our government as a resident Minister, as if the relations between the two Republics had suffered no alteration since the final act of the annexation of Texas was consummated. At the very moment that Mr. Slidell presented himself the troops of the United States were occupying our territory. Their squadrons threatened our ports, and they were preparing to occupy the peninsula of the Californias of which the question of Oregon with England is no more than a preliminary. I did not admit Mr. Slidell because the dignity of the nation would repel this new insult.

In the meantime the army of the United States encamped at Corpus Christi and occupied the Island of Padre Vallin, and then marched to Santa Isabel and the flag of the stars waved on the right bank (*sic*) of the Rio Bravo del Norte opposite the city of Matamoros, they previously stopping the navigation of the river by means of their ships of war. The town of Laredo was surprised by a party of their troops and a piquet of our forces who had been sent there to reconnoitre was disarmed. Hostilities therefore have been begun by the United States of America, who have undertaken new conquests in the territory lying within the line of

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the Departments of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon while the troops of the United States are threatening Monterey in Upper California

So many and such bitter outrages can be tolerated no longer, and I have commanded the general-in-chief of the division of our northern frontier to attack the army which is attacking us; to answer with war the enemy who makes war upon us; and that—invoking the god of battles—the valor of our soldiers may preserve our unquestionable right to the territory, and the honor of our arms which are not to be employed but in defence of justice. Our general, abiding by established usages and in accordance with the positive directions of my government, has demanded from the commander-in-chief of the American troops that they retire to the other side of the Nueces River, the ancient boundary of Texas, and the demand has been refused

I solemnly announce that I do not decree war against the government of the United States of America, because it belongs to the august Congress of the nation, and not to the Executive, to decide definitely what reparation must be exacted for such injuries. But the defence of Mexican territory which the troops of the United States are invading is an urgent necessity, and my responsibility before the nation would be immense if I did not order the repulse of forces which are acting as enemies; and I have so ordered. From this day defensive war begins, and every point of our territory which may be invaded or attacked shall be defended by force.²⁶

On April 11th General Ampudia had arrived in Matamoros at the head of a considerable body of troops. (According to Jenkins,

²⁶ Rives, George Lockhart, *The United States and Mexico 1821-1848*, pp. 141 and 142.

Preparations in Mexico

200 cavalry and 2200 foot soldiers.) The next day, after ordering the American Consul and all other American citizens to leave Matamoros without delay, he addressed the following communication to General Taylor:

(Translation)

FOURTH MILITARY DIVISION

General-in-Chief

To explain to you the many grounds for the just grievances felt by the Mexican nation, caused by the United States government, would be a loss of time, and an insult to your good sense; I therefore pass at once to such explanations as I consider of absolute necessity.

Your government, in an incredible manner—you will even permit me to say an extravagant one, if the usage or general rules established and received among all civilized nations are regarded—has not only insulted, but has exasperated the Mexican nation, bearing its conquering banner to the left bank of the Rio Bravo del Norte; and in this case, by explicit and definitive orders of my government, which neither can, will, nor shall receive new outrages, I require you in all form, and at latest in the peremptory term of twenty-four hours, to break up your camp and retire to the other bank of the Nueces River, while our governments are regulating the pending question in relation to Texas. If you insist in remaining upon the soil of the department of Tamaulipas, it will clearly result that arms, and arms alone, must decide the question; and in that case I advise you that we accept the war to which, with so much injustice on your part, you provoke us, and that, on our part, this war shall be conducted conformably to the principles established by the most civilized nations; that is to say that the law of nations

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and of war shall be the guide of my operations; trusting that on your part the same will be observed.

With this view, I tender you the considerations due to your person and respectable office.

God and Liberty!

HEADQUARTERS AT MATAMOROS,

2 o'clock, P. M., April 12, 1846.

PEDRO DE AMPUDIA.

Señor General-in-Chief of the United States Army,

Don Z. TAYLOR.

To this summons General Taylor replied:

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF OCCUPATION.

Camp near Matamoros, Texas, April 12, 1846.

SEÑOR: I have had the honor to receive your note of this date, in which you summon me to withdraw the forces under my command from their present position, and beyond the river Nueces, until the pending question between our governments, relative to the limits of Texas, shall be settled.

I need hardly advise you that, charged, as I am, in only a military capacity, with the performance of specific duties, I cannot enter into a discussion of the international question involved in the advance of the American army. You will, however, permit me to say that the government of the United States has constantly sought a settlement, by negotiation, of the question of boundary; that an envoy was despatched to Mexico for that purpose, and that up to the most recent dates said envoy had not been received by the actual Mexican government, if indeed he has not received his passports and left the republic. In the meantime, I have been ordered to occupy the country up the left bank of the Rio Grande, until the boundary shall be definitely settled. In carrying out these instructions I have carefully abstained from all acts of hostility, obeying, in this

Preparations in Mexico

regard, not only the letter of my instructions, but the plain dictates of justice and humanity.

The instructions under which I am acting will not permit me to retrograde from the position I now occupy. In view of the relations between our respective governments, and the individual suffering which may result, I regret the alternative which you offer; but, at the same time, wish it understood that I shall by no means avoid such alternative, leaving the responsibility with those who rashly commence hostilities. In conclusion, you will permit me to give the assurance that, on my part, the laws and customs of war among civilized nations shall be carefully observed.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant.

Z. TAYLOR,

Brevet Brig. General U. S. A.
Commanding

Señor General D. PEDRO DE AMPUDIA.

General Worth was appointed to bear the foregoing communication to General Mejia of the Matamoros command. After some delay Mejia despatched General La Vega to meet Worth. Total result of the interview consisted in the return of two dragoons who had been captured by the Mexicans.

Chapter VII

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CONSTRUCTION of Fort Brown commenced almost immediately after the troops arrived. It began with the erection of small mounds of dirt for the reception of eighteen-pounders daily expected from Point Isabel. The general building of the Fort was under the supervision of Captain Mansfield of the Engineering Corps. Details for the labor consisted of regiments taking turns. The garrison was given six bastion fronts, and was capable of holding four or five units of regimental strength.

Incidents of war had already commenced.

On April 9th, Colonel Trueman Cross, the assistant quartermaster-general, accompanied by his son, a mere lad, went riding beyond the limits of Camp Taylor. The purpose of the ride was probably for reconnaissance as well as

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pleasure. (Gossip, persisting to this day, among the old-timers of Brownsville, Texas has it that Colonel Cross rode out to the cabin of a *señorita*, located a short distance northwest of the present site of the city.) Son and father apparently parted during the ride, the former returning to camp alone. Some days later the Colonel's remains were found in the chaparral, where mutilation of his body had followed robbery and death. Although General Ampudia declared the deed to be the work of the *rancheros*, over whom he claimed to be unable to exercise full control, many in the American forces believed the act to have been the direct work of spying parties from the Mexican army.

A second provocative incident was not unlike the first. Lieutenant Theodoric Porter, of the 4th Infantry, together with Lieutenant Dobbins, were sent in search of Colonel Cross, and on the 18th fell in with 150 Mexicans, and put them to flight, taking their equipment and horses. Unfortunately, on their return to camp, they were attacked at night by a large party of Mexicans, and Lieutenant Porter, son of the late Commodore Porter, was killed.

On April 24th General Arista arrived in Matamoros to replace Ampudia. According to Smith, Arista's forces at Matamoros consisted of "175 artillerymen, 3500 infantry, 425 irregular horse under General Antonio Canales, and some 500 Matamoros volunteers—in all, say 5700

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men including officers and ineffectives. His first brigade consisted of infantry led by García, a fine and brave officer; the second, also infantry, had Vega, a brave and patriotic soldier, for commander; and the third brigade cavalry was under Torrejon, who possessed one outstanding quality—the instinct of self-preservation. Canales could be described succinctly as a border ruffian and conspirator; and Ampudia, second in general command, was about the same thing plus a cosmopolitan varnish.”²⁷

On that same day General Torrejon, with all of his new commander’s cavalry and some infantry—about 1600 in all—crossed the Rio Grande. The immediate activity of his force is indicated by the following letters from two of Taylor’s officers who were captured:

MATAMOROS, MEXICO, April 27, 1846

SIR: I have the honor to report my arrival at this place today, and to state that agreeably with your orders I proceeded to within three miles of La Rosia, when I was informed that the enemy had crossed in large numbers. Upon receiving this information, our guide refused to go any farther. I was therefore compelled to move on without him, in order to carry out your instructions to me. The advanced guard was increased, and Lieutenant Mason placed ahead. When he had gone about two miles, I discovered some Mexicans near a house in a large field. I halted the advanced guard and went into the field myself to see them. I

²⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Ch. viii.

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had not gone more than a hundred yards when they fled; I turned around and motioned to the advanced guard to come on. In the meantime the main body of the squadron had come up to the advance guard, and, mistaking my order, followed in after them; and while I was questioning a Mexican the enemy appeared. I immediately ordered a charge, in order to cut my way through them; but finding their numbers too large to contend with any longer, I ordered a retreat; and although entirely surrounded, we endeavored to cut our way through to camp. In the retreat my horse fell upon me, and I was unable to rise. I am now fully convinced that we were watched from the time we left camp, and that preparations were so made as to prevent our ever returning. It affords me great pleasure to say that the officers and men under my command, both individually and collectively, behaved in the most gallant manner.

As a prisoner of war, I am happy to inform you that attentions and kindness have been lavished upon me, as a proof of which, I will state that upon my reporting to General Arista that a dragoon had treated me rudely, he ordered him immediate punishment.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

T. B. THORNTON,

Captain 2nd Dragoons.

Captain W. W. S. Bliss,

Assistant Adjutant General.

Executive Document No. 119

MATAMOROS, MEXICO, April 26, 1846

SIR: It becomes my painful duty to inform you of the circumstances which led to our being brought to this place as prisoners of war. Captain Thornton's command, consisting of fifty-two dragoons, left camp, as you know, at night on the 24th instant; it marched 15 miles and halted until daylight, when the march was again

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resumed. Captain Thornton's orders, as I understood them, were to ascertain if the enemy had crossed the river above our camp, and to reconnoitre his position and force. All his inquiries on the way tended to the conviction that the enemy had crossed in strength. About 28 miles from our camp our guide became so satisfied of this fact that he refused to go any further, and no entreaties on the part of Captain Thornton could shake his resolution. About three miles from this latter place we came on a large plantation bordering the river, and enclosed with a high chaparral fence, with some houses at its upper extremity. To these houses Captain Thornton endeavored, by entering the lower extremity, to approach; but failing to do so, he was compelled to pass round the fence, and entered the field by a pair of bars, the house being situated about 200 yards from the entrance. Into this plantation the whole command entered in single file, without any guard being placed in front, without any sentinel at the bars, or any other precaution being taken to prevent surprise. Captain Thornton was prepossessed with the idea that the Mexicans had not crossed; and if they had, that they would not fight. I had been placed in rear, and was therefore the last to enter. When I came up to the house I found the men scattered in every direction, hunting for some one with whom to communicate. At last an old man was found; and while Captain Thornton was talking to him, the cry of alarm was given, and the enemy were seen in numbers at the bars. Our gallant commander immediately gave the command to charge, and himself led the advance; but it was too late; the enemy had secured the entrance, and it was impossible to force it. The officers and men did everything that fearless intrepidity could accomplish; but the infantry had stationed themselves in the field on the right of the passage way, and the cavalry lined the exterior fence, and our retreat was hopelessly cut off.

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Seeing this, Captain Thornton turned to the right and skirted the interior of the fence, the command following him. During this time the enemy were shooting at us in every direction; and when the retreat commenced, our men were in a perfect state of disorder. I rode up to Captain Thornton and told him that our only hope of safety was in tearing down the fence; he gave the order, but could not stop his horse, nor would the men stop. I was useless, for by this time the enemy had gained our rear in great numbers. Foreseeing that the direction which Captain Thornton was pursuing would lead to the certain destruction of himself and men, without the possibility of resistance, I turned to the right and told the men to follow me. I made for the river, intending either to swim it or to place myself in a position for defence. I found the bank too boggy to accomplish the former, and I therefore rallied the men, forming them in order of battle in the open field, and without the range of the Infantry behind the fence. I counted twenty-five men and examined their arms, but almost every one had lost a sabre, a pistol, or a carbine: nevertheless, the men were firm and disposed, if necessary, to fight to the last extremity. In five minutes from the time the first shot was fired, the field was surrounded by a numerous body of men. However, I determined to sell our lives as dearly as possible if I could not secure good treatment, and accordingly I went forward and arranged with an officer that I should deliver myself and men as prisoners of war; to be treated with all the consideration to which such unfortunates are entitled by the rules of civilized warfare. I was taken to General Torrejon, who by this time had his whole force collected in the field. I found that some prisoners had already been taken; which, together with those I had and those which were subsequently brought in, amounted to 45 men, exclusive of Lieutenant Kane and myself. Four were wounded. I know nothing certain of the fate of

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Captain Thornton and Lieutenant Mason: the latter I did not see after the fight commenced. I am convinced they both died bravely. The former I know was unhorsed, and killed, as I learn, in single combat, by Romano Falcon. Lieutenant Mason's spurs were seen, after the fight, in possession of the enemy. The brave Sergeant Tredo fell in the first charge. Sergeant Smith was unhorsed and killed. The bodies of seven men were found, including as I believe, the two officers above mentioned.

I was brought to Matamoros today about 4 o'clock, and I take pleasure in stating that since our surrender I and my brave companions in misfortune have been treated with uniform kindness and attention. It may soften the rigors of war for you to be informed fully of this fact. Lieutenant Kane and myself are living with General Ampudia: we lodge in his hotel, eat at his table, and his frank, agreeable manner and generous hospitality almost make us forget our captivity. General Arista received us in the most gracious manner; said that his nation had been regarded as barbarous, and that he wished to prove to us the contrary. Told Lieutenant Kane and myself that we should receive half pay, and our men should receive ample rations, and in lieu of it for today 25 cents a piece. On declining the boon on the part of Lieutenant Kane and myself, and a request that we be permitted to send to camp for money, he said no; that he could not permit it; that he intended to supply all our wants himself. These promises have already been fulfilled in part.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. T. HARDEE,

Captain 2nd Dragoons.

Torrejon's prisoners were sent to Matamoros, while he marched around Taylor's position to a point on the Rio Grande opposite the Rancho

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de Longoreno, about 12 miles below Matamoros, this place having been selected for the crossing of the main body of the Mexican force.

The drawing of Torrejon to Longoreno was a grave tactical blunder, as the Point Isabel-Fort Brown road was being held by his force and without Taylor's knowledge. It seems probable that it was brought to that point to cover the crossing of other troops—those of Ampudia and Arista, while Mejia was left in Matamoros with 1400 men to protect the city.

After these "preliminary bouts," Taylor briefed Washington that hostilities had commenced. For several days thereafter he was busy with his engineers constructing a fort. Soon he learned of the Mexican Army's plans to cross the river below Matamoros, and interpreted this as intention to attack the depot at Point Isabel. He consequently decided to march there. Leaving on the afternoon of May 1st, he placed Major Jacob Brown in charge of the now fairly formidable little fort. The garrison consisted of one regiment of infantry, two companies of artillery, and those on the sick list—a total of not to exceed 500; probably not over 400 enlisted men and officers although somewhat confusing reports place the number at 539.

As Smith points out, Taylor's defense plans were not very secure.

Our troops were on a point exposed to convergent fire; Fort Brown enfiladed none of the hostile batteries,

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though it might have been planned to do this; near the cavalry camp stood thick groves offering shelter to assailants; behind our main position was a lagoon forming, with a bend in the river, almost a circle; and the enemy, once in possession of the single road, which ran for seven or eight miles through rough country, would have had the army in a bottle. All the ammunition and provisions were brought by wagon from the coast, exposed to attack at every step. The imperfectly fortified base at Point Isabel, stored with indispensable supplies, had a garrison of only two companies aside from two or three hundred settlers, clerks, teamsters, and the like; and vessels could approach the landing only by a narrow passage between two islands, which could have been closed by a few six-pounders.

On May 2nd General Taylor arrived at Point Isabel without gaining sight of the enemy; here he remained for five days during which time the position there was strengthened. On May 6th, the Gulf Squadron, comprising 500 marines and bluejackets, under Captain Gregory of the *U. S. S. Raritan*, arrived to help defend the post at Isabel. On May 7th Taylor and his force, now increased by a part of the Point Isabel garrison (which had been strengthened by a few recruits recently arrived from New Orleans), started back to Fort Brown (probably because they had heard the cannons roar in that direction), accompanied by a large train of wagons loaded with provisions and ammunition, and two eighteen-pounder guns drawn by oxen.

Arista, while Taylor was at Point Isabel,

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wasted a week by apparently lackadaisical failure to carry out his plan. His first division, under Ampudia, had crossed the river on April 30; the second followed on May 1st.

The next day he learned that Taylor had passed him, and was well on the way to Point Isabel. Fearing that the American troops, left at the fort, might make some attempt on Matamoros, Arista sent back a battalion to the defence of the town, sent some cavalry to watch Taylor, and with the bulk of his forces encamped at Palo Alto, where Taylor's infantry had encamped six weeks earlier on their way to Matamoros. Palo Alto, however, was ill supplied with water, and on the 4th of May Arista fell back to the Tanques del Ramireño, a point about eight miles from the river, and half-way between Palo Alto and the point where the Mexican Army had crossed. From there he sent Ampudia to besiege Fort Brown, with a force consisting of perhaps a thousand infantry and four guns. Ampudia, as has been seen, accomplished nothing.

On the morning of Friday, the 8th of May, Arista learned that Taylor was on the march back to Fort Brown, and at once set his troops in motion for the open prairie at Palo Alto, which he had selected as the scene of the battle. Shortly after noon his forces were in position, and at half past two he was joined by Ampudia, who had been ordered to raise the siege of the fort and to join the commander-in-chief.

The numbers of the Mexicans were never very clearly ascertained. In the previous December, Arista, writing to Paredes for reinforcements, said he had available only 800 men at Matamoros, 420 at the presidio of the Rio Grande, and barely 1200 at his own ranch of Mamulique. This made 2420 in all. Paredes, of course, sent no reinforcements at that time, as he needed them all himself for his march on the City of Mexico; but as soon as

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he felt strong enough to spare any troops he detached Ampudia, who reached Matamoros with about 2200 men. There were also some reinforcements from Tampico, and possibly other points, so that when Arista took command his force may be reckoned at about 5200.

These troops were considered as good as any in the Mexican army. There were four regiments of infantry of the line, the permanent battalions of Tampico, Mexico, Puebla, and Morelia, three regiments of cavalry, a battalion of engineers (*zapadores*), and some local national guards and *guardacostas*. They had altogether 26 field-pieces; but they were ill supplied with provisions or reserve ammunition, and they were totally without surgeons or field-hospitals. Deducting 190 men left by Ampudia in observation in front of Fort Brown, and the garrison left in Matamoros, numbering 1350, Arista, according to Mexican reports, had in line at Palo Alto 3270 men, with 12 guns—an estimate which is probably too low.

The American force amounted to 2111 sabres and bayonets, or about 2300 men in all—roughly speaking, 70 per cent of the acknowledged Mexican strength. But if Taylor's army was small, it was of high quality. The officers, with very few exceptions, were graduates of West Point. The men, though a large proportion were foreigners—English, Irish, and German immigrants—had been long and carefully drilled, especially during the months that they had been in camp at Corpus Christi, and no army that the United States had ever put in the field was thought to have been more efficient.²⁸

²⁸ Rives, *op. cit.*, pp. 145 and 146.

Chapter VIII

The Battle of Palo Alto

WHEN ON MAY 7, 1846, General Zachary Taylor marched from his base at Point Isabel (Frontone) with a supply train of 300 wagons for his advanced base at Fort Taylor, 27 miles distant, he was at the head of the entire army of occupation, except for 539 troops he had left at Fort Taylor to hold that post, and some 450 left at Point Isabel to guard his base—or 2211 men and officers. His instructions from his government forbade acts of war against the government of Mexico unless attacked; however he interpreted his authority to include disarming and imprisoning armed bands of Mexicans found in the disputed territory which lay between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande and was claimed by both the newly admitted state of Texas and by Mexico. The arrest of these armed

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bands was justified on the assumption that they were lawless brigands, which in fact they were, and not regular troops of the Mexican army, which in many cases they were also. It is necessary to keep this mission of General Taylor in mind to understand his seeming lack of aggressiveness in a number of instances.

When General Taylor left Point Isabel he knew that Fort Taylor had been fired upon by the Mexican batteries from across the Rio Grande for three days, and that the fire had been returned by the guns of the fort. He suspected that the ammunition supply of the besieged troops might be running low and regarded it urgent that the supply train reach the post without delay; he had also received reports that General Manuel Arista, at the head of the Mexican army—whose strength was variously estimated up to 50,000—was somewhere in the area between Point Isabel and Matamoros.

Much of the route taken by the American army, which was the old road between Point Isabel and Matamoros, ran through dense chaparral regarded as impassable for mounted troops and offering great obstacle to infantry; however about seven miles from Matamoros the road emerged from the chaparral out upon a broad prairie covered with high grass. It was called by the Mexicans "El Alto" and by the Americans was known as "Palo Alto." It was about two miles in length along the highway

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and roughly a mile in width. When the head of the American column entered this prairie just before 1:00 p. m. May 8th, the head of the Mexican column appeared at the opposite end. General Taylor halted his column just inside the prairie where there were two resacas; fed and watered his horses and rested his troops for two hours. General Arista immediately deployed his troops, taking a position directly across the road with his right resting on chaparral and his left on a small swamp; he then awaited the approach of the Americans.

There is reason to believe that General Arista had selected this site beforehand for a stand and had expected to occupy it before the arrival of the American force, which reached El Alto somewhat earlier than he had expected. At 3 o'clock General Taylor resumed his march as before, in column. When his advance guard arrived within about 500 yards of the enemy, the Mexican batteries began firing. The Americans deployed directly facing the Mexican position and about three-quarters of a mile distant, and advanced to within 400 yards of the enemy, the wagon train following closely in the rear. About 450 troops (including 300 wagon drivers who were all armed), were detailed to guard the wagons, which it was expected would be the objective of cavalry attacks. The remainder of the troops formed in line of battle as follows:

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5th Infantry under command of Lieutenant Colonel James S. McIntosh on the extreme right; then an Artillery Battery commanded by Major Samuel Ringgold; 3rd Infantry with Captain Lewis N. Morris in command; 2 eighteen-pound guns commanded by Lieutenant William H. Churchill; 4th Infantry with Major George W. Allen in command. The foregoing comprised the right wing. The left wing was formed by a battalion of artillery under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Childs; a battery of light artillery (six-pounders) in command of Captain Duncan; the 8th Infantry under command of Captain William R. Montgomery. A squadron of cavalry under Captain Charles A. May was held in reserve, and to the remaining squadron commanded by Captain Croghan Kerr was assigned the task of guarding the wagon train. The army was organized as three brigades—the left wing constituting the 1st brigade in command of Lieutenant Colonel William G. Belknap; the right wing, except the 3rd and 4th Infantry and the Cavalry, constituted the 2nd Brigade and was commanded by Brigadier General David E. Twiggs; and the 3rd and 4th Infantry constituted the 3rd Brigade and was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Garland.

General Arista's troops were disposed as follows: (See map) On the right, screened by a small rise of ground and resting on chaparral,

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was posted a squadron (A) of the Light Regiment of Mexico, the line prolonged over the prairie; to the left of the squadron was one gun (A' ' '), then the Battalion of Sappers (B.S.), followed by the Second Regiment of Light (2); next the Battalion and a company of the Guarda Costa (G.C.) of Tampico; then a battery of eight guns (A'), followed by the First, Sixth, Tenth, and Fourth of the Line, in the order mentioned. The infantry was under Generals de la Vega and García. Four hundred yards to the left of the infantry were four squadrons of cavalry from the Seventh (c) and Eighth (b) Light Regiments, and the Presidial (p) companies; in the interval between the first and second of these were two light pieces (A'') of artillery, commanded by General Torrejon.

General Ampudia, with a company of Sappers, two guns, the 4th Regiment of the Line, and 200 Auxiliaries was posted on the left flank at some distance, screened by the woods. (See Wilcox, Cadmus, M. *History of the Mexican War*, p. 52).

The number in the American force is definitely known to be as given above. The number of troops in General Arista's command is uncertain. General Taylor estimated it at 6000. Lieutenant G. G. Meade stated in correspondence after the battle that there were not fewer than 6000. The best obtainable information places the regular troops at 1500 infantry

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and artillery and 1500 cavalry and the irregular (virtually impressed) troops at approximately 2000 infantry and 1000 cavalry. General Arista in his official report of the battle makes no reference to these irregular troops. The latter were said by American writers to have been undisciplined, untrained, and wholly inefficient—doubtless an exaggeration, since the fact that the Mexican troops stood in mass formation subjected to a destructive fire from the American artillery for five hours and did not withdraw to the protection of the chaparral immediately behind them is as much a tribute to the discipline of the force as it is evidence of the incompetence of the high command.

Many accounts of the Battle of Palo Alto have been written—the American in the main based upon the modest, drab official report of General Taylor which is almost devoid of detail; the Mexican based upon the highly colored and somewhat boastful official report of General Arista. They need not be repeated here. It suffices to say that except for one attack by the Mexican Cavalry and its repulse by the 5th Infantry, and a single charge by the American Cavalry just at nightfall, it was purely a duel between the Mexican and the American Artillery, in which the former was almost ineffective and the latter remarkably effective. It is to be classed with the naval battle of Manila Bay and other battles in which the outcome was tremen-

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dously important and the effects far-reaching, but which were practically without casualties on the American side when compared to those suffered by the enemy. The loss to the American force was: killed, 4 enlisted; wounded, 3 officers and 39 enlisted. The exact loss of the Mexicans is unknown. General Arista placed it at 252 killed, wounded and "dispersed." General Taylor estimated it at least 1000 killed and wounded. Approximately 200 Mexican dead left on the battlefield were buried by the American troops. When darkness stopped the battle, both armies held their original positions and the battle line had shifted but little.

The opposing forces differed even more in the character of their commanders than in numbers and equipment. General Taylor was better characterized as sagacious than cautious. He was an experienced and successful Indian fighter and well described by the popular nickname of "Old Rough and Ready." General Arista was an aristocrat, a politician with great influence, and had served in the Royal Army of Spain. General Taylor's primary objective was to get his supply train to Fort Taylor (later Fort Brown), safely. If he failed in that he would have to abandon his advanced base on the border and his occupation of the disputed territory. He would let nothing entice him away from his train. At nightfall, when the enemy force was in panic and pursuit would

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have routed and destroyed him, Taylor would not give the order for pursuit since it would have meant leaving his wagon train behind and risking its possible capture. Although General Arista's command comprised all hostile troops in the vicinity, General Taylor had no dependable information that such was the case. General Arista could have accomplished his purpose either by destroying his opponent's force or otherwise preventing delivery of the supplies to Fort Taylor on the frontier. He chose to risk a battle on the site peculiarly adapted to the use of artillery, although he had reason to know from the bombardment of Fort Taylor that the American artillery was much superior to his own. Furthermore, he elected to employ purely defensive tactics, at no time attempting to seize the initiative until near the close of the battle, when a futile attack was made by cavalry already much demoralized by several hours of artillery fire at point blank range.

The commanding generals of both armies remained with the troops, as did the brigade, regimental and all other officers. Nor did they dismount. Major Ringgold was mortally wounded by a shell that killed the horse he was riding. General Taylor remained with the eighteen-pound guns most of the time and directed operations personally from that station, which was the most forward element of his line. During the whole afternoon the infantry stood

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by the guns, from which the horses were not removed, ready to repel an attack upon them or to protect the wagon train should Arista's cavalry (he had 2500 mounted troops) attempt to capture it. The distance between the lines (400 yards) was greater than the range of the small arms of either side. During the afternoon the prairie grass caught fire, resulting in a dense smoke screen. Firing ceased for three-quarters of an hour until the air was clear again. Neither side attempted to take advantage of its invisibility to change positions. When darkness ensued, the battle ceased and the American troops slept in their places. The Mexican Army withdrew four miles to the Resaca de Guerrero. General Taylor, who expected to continue the battle the next morning, was surprised to find the enemy position evacuated. Apparently neither commander had concerned himself in the least as to what the opposing force might be doing during the night.

Hardly anything can emphasize more than this one-sided battle of Palo Alto the change that a century has wrought in military tactics. No camouflage—artillery fire at point blank range—mounted officers riding up and down in front of the battle line—no field fortifications—no breast works, not even foxholes—massed formations under fire—complete disregard of military intelligence, in fact its entire absence—a phantasmagoria to the modern soldier.

Chapter IX

Resaca de la Palma

THE RETREAT of the Mexican forces from Palo Alto did not extend very far. It went only a few miles south to a ravine, described by T. B. Thorpe (*Our Army On The Rio Grande*), to have been breast high and sixty yards wide, the lowest part being filled with water at all times, thus forming a series of large ponds, or resacas, the same being old beds of the Rio Grande. La Resaca was crossed at right angles by the road leading to Fort Brown. The chaparral here was especially thick, forming an almost solid wall on each side of the road. It was almost a perfect entrenchment for an army, so much so that on his way to the banks of the Rio Grande, General Taylor had remarked that at such a place would he expect to find the enemy bulwarked.

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The Mexicans, having received reinforcements during the night, and now about 6000 strong, as against Taylor's 2100, were in excellent position here. In addition to the strength of their entrenchments and that which the terrain afforded, their artillery had, according to Robinson (*The Army of The United States*, Vol. II, p. 40), been scientifically posted, and completely commanded the narrow road..

Before the battle started, General Taylor securely placed the supply train, arranging the Artillery Brigade under Colonel Childs, Captain Duncan's battery, and the 8th Regiment for its protection.

The first step toward moving the army in line consisted in deploying eight companies of the 1st Brigade under Captain C. F. Smith of the 2nd Artillery, and a select detachment of eight troops, all under Captain McCall of the 4th Infantry. Even ahead of these units, however, was Captain Walker, who advanced to feel out the Point Isabel-Matamoros road. After this was reported open, the above named units proceeded about two or three miles, Captain Smith with the eight companies of the 1st Brigade taking the right side, and Captain McCall taking the left with artillery and infantry. Lieutenant Pleasanton, with the 2nd Dragoons, brought up the rear.

After small parties of Mexicans had been encountered and had fired on our troops (such an

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incident was experienced by Lieutenant Dobbins and party), Lieutenant Randolph Ridgley's battery (formerly Ringgold's), was ordered forward on the road, accompanied by the 3rd, one half of the 4th and the 5th Infantry Regiments, the troops of which also acted as skirmishers.

The 5th, out in front and bolstered by a portion of the 4th, deployed for speed, and went up the left side of the road, while the 3rd Regiment, plus the remainder of the 4th, banked the opposite side.

General Taylor, with his staff, rode toward the front, and ordered the real action brought on about 4:00 p. m. The battle commenced in earnest when Lieutenant Ridgley's troops, upon locating the Mexican batteries in the road, charged them at top speed in the face of their fire. About the same time McCall's musketry encountered the right wing of the enemy's infantry and opened fire on it.

Ridgley was lucky in that the enemy, apparently failing to realize the speed of his approach, aimed too high. He had reason to be confident too, as the 5th Regiment, under Lieutenant Colonel McIntosh, was coming up to support the forward battery. Other units, accompanied by Smith's Light and other Corps, which were moving forward at this time, included the following:

(1) The 8th Regiment, now under the im-

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mediate command of Captain W. R. Montgomery, which was ordered forward and to the right at double time, in columns of companies, proceeding under destructive showers of grape to the rear of

(2) Duncan's battery, which had now been directed to the front.

(3) The 3rd Regiment, under Captain L. N. Morris, and the 4th, under Major Allen, which formed in the ravine.

Not very long after the battle commenced, our infantry captured the piece of artillery on the right of the enemy's line. As a result, foot soldiers felt encouraged and made an attempt to cross the Resaca, but this was not to be accomplished now, due to the murderous fire of the Mexican batteries. Indeed, their effect was so obstructing that Captain May reported to General Taylor that the progress of the American forces was being seriously hindered. The ensuing instructions from the Commanding General resulted in a famous charge made by May, who was ordered to take the enemy's strongest position. As the gallant cavalryman rode past Lieutenant Ridgley, the latter called for May to wait until the enemy's fire was drawn (felling 18 horses and 7 men, including Lieutenants Sackett and Inge). The Mexicans scarcely had time to reload before the American soldiers rushed into the emplacements under the spurring leadership of such officers as Lieuten-

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ant Stevens, Captain Graham, Lieutenant Winship, and Lieutenant Pleasanton. The fury of the charge is indicated by the fact that at times they leaped directly over the enemy's batteries. It was dangerous going, and the ground was by no means easily gained, for, after driving the Mexican artillerists away, their infantry swarmed around the heavy pieces of its sister fighting branch, forming a solid phalanx, disputing passage at point of bayonet. But such resistance was met by walls of Americans who charged *en masse*, the 5th Regiment now being ahead. The Mexicans fought hard. The advantage of country and terrain was on their side, as our forces were frequently baffled and hindered by the peculiarity of the ground, including the tree clumps, which afforded excellent cover for the Mexicans.

Captain May's impetuosity causing him to charge at least one piece of artillery with only five men, soon found him attempting the seemingly impossible with a limited force scattered amongst the enemy. Not being able to hold all which was being taken, with particular reference to the enemy's main battery, he dashed over to the 8th Regiment for help. The response was very gratifying, as Lieutenant Colonel Belknap ordered this organization forward on the road, it being supplemented by a part of the 5th Infantry, under Captain M. Scott. After being temporarily checked by the

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enemy, these units went into hand-to-hand conflict with the Tampico veterans. When Belknap had the staff of his standard shot away, (being simultaneously policed by his horse, which suddenly shied at a heap of wounded and dead artillerists), his men thought their commander dead and were amazed to see him at the head of his command a while later. In the meantime the organization had proceeded up the ravine under fire, having been joined by the main strength of the 5th under Lieutenant Colonel McIntosh. Thus reinforced, May's charge soon evolved into what has been regarded as the most successful wage of the battle.

As already noted, the enemy presented a furious defense, and at times inflicted considerable damage upon our forces. Among the most important of those injured was Lieutenant Colonel McIntosh. This occurred when he sprang into thick chaparral which was infested with Mexican infantry and cavalrymen. While fighting several opponents with his sword, his horse was pulled from under him. Upon rising he was confronted by several more enemy. While defending himself, a bayonet was rammed into his mouth, emerging below the ear; another through his arm, and still another through his hip. Fortunately, Captain Duncan approached and relieved the Colonel. Lieutenant Charles D. Jordan had a narrow escape similar to that of Colonel McIntosh. Lieu-

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tenant George Lincoln arrived just in time to prevent a Mexican from thrusting his bayonet through Jordan's body. Lieutenant Chadbourne, however, after distinguishing himself for bravery, fell mortally wounded at the head of his command.

When Colonel McIntosh was wounded, his command was taken over by Major Stanford, and the 5th continued through the engagement with valor. The 3rd Regiment, under Captain L. N. Morris, and the 4th under Major Allen, also did well. From these units Captain Buchanan, as senior officer in the vicinity, took Lieutenants Hays and Woods, subalterns, with 25 or 30 men, charged across the lagoon, waist deep in mud and water, and succeeded in routing a much larger strength of enemy. Hays and Woods showed particular cleverness, the former by grabbing the reins of the mules hitched to a field piece, and the latter by manipulating the handshifts and causing a wheel to get caught on a tree. The little band might well have been overtaken in the very act of their endeavor by a Mexican cavalry group had it not been for the timely approach of Captain Barbour and a detachment of the 3rd. In driving off the hostile force, the officer in command was shot by Corporal Chisholm. This unfortunate non-commissioned officer was killed a few moments later.

By this time all order of the battle was lost, and the enemy was rapidly being driven toward

Resaca de la Palma

the Rio Grande. The cavalry and infantry, forming a confused mass, broke into greater panic when Duncan's and Ridgeley's batteries were opened on them.

In the pursuit, Lieutenants Woods, Hays, Cochran, and Augur, accompanied by a few scattered details from several organizations, came upon the Headquarters of General Arista. While there, they were charged by a squadron of lancers, and Lieutenant Cochran was killed with seven thrusts. It is noteworthy that all of Arista's official correspondence was found in the camp and carried away by the Americans who had taken the place.

Apparently defeat had come most unexpectedly, as General Arista's camp indicated anticipation of victory. In addition to the half-unpacked bounty of military supplies and baggage, pots and kettles were found full of the food which was to have been served at the banquet of victory. The cooks scarcely had time to flee as Taylor's forces came rushing into the encampment.

Undoubtedly the most distinguished Mexican prisoner taken in the battle of Resaca de la Palma was Don Rómulo de la Vega, a brevet brigadier general, one of whose field pieces had inflicted so much damage on the American forces. He was taken while in the act of applying a linstock to a loaded gun.

Although the Mexicans fought better than

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in the previous day's battle, they were nevertheless routed. They broke in panic. Many were lost as they attempted to cross the Rio Grande. There was only one ferry. The story has often been told that it was loaded with retreating soldiers, and was ready to leave the Texas side when suddenly the Mexican cavalry dashed on the boat, crushing dozens of occupants. This added to the already heavy number of casualties (according to General Taylor, about 1000 missing, killed or wounded) suffered in the battle.

The number of casualties on the American side, while not to be compared with the figure cited above, nevertheless included many killed. May's Charge alone cost the lives of three officers—Lieutenants Inge, Cochran and Chadbourne. Among those on the battle's wounded list were Lieutenant Colonel McIntosh; Lieutenant Colonel M. M. Payne, acting Inspector-General; Captain Hoe Montgomery; and Lieutenants Jordan, Dobbins, Felden, Burbank, Maclay, Gates, Fowler and Morris. (According to Taylor's report, out of 173 officers and 2049 men—the actual number engaged with the enemy not exceeding 1700—the loss was 3 officers and 36 men killed, and 71 wounded.)

According to Smith, referring to Arista's report (bound to have been conservative to the extent of error), his losses on May 9th were 160 killed, 228 wounded and 159 missing.

Chapter X

Bombardment of Fort Brown

THE DEFENSE of Point Isabel had been left in charge of Major John Munroe, with two companies of artillery, and protective construction was planned by Captain J. Saunders of the Corps of Engineers. The place, while not imminently threatened, was in a state of anxiety due to the occurrences around Fort Brown, and the nearby demonstrations of enemy troops. Also, by this time it was well known that bodies of hostile troops were between Point Isabel and the Rio Grande. However, there were at least 50 or 60 seamen from Commodore Connor's crew, and infiltrating parties of Texas Rangers on hand, in addition to the force which General Taylor had left to guard the supplies.

Major Munroe decided to communicate with General Taylor, probably to advise him that

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Point Isabel could not be defended against a large number of Mexicans. After several messenger units had returned to the Frontone, failing to get through the 27 miles, their efforts being met with losses, Capt. Walker of the Texas Rangers left on April 29th and made his way through the perilous area. Upon receiving Walker, Taylor was aroused to depart Fort Brown and move to Point Isabel, to assure protection of his supplies. This he did on May 1st.

It followed that the citizens of Matamoros, almost constantly aware of Taylor's plans and movements, had prepared a mild celebration over what General Arista, who was in charge of the Mexican forces there, interpreted or pretended to interpret as the retreat of the American army. Moreover, General Torrejon, with a considerable force, crossed the river with apparent intent of cutting off the American commander. Why he paused instead of carrying this out has never been explained. Some hours later he was joined by Arista.

Major Jacob Brown with the 7th Infantry was left in command of Fort Taylor. In addition to this force were left two companies of artillery commanded by Captain Lowd and Lieutenant Bragg—in all, about 500 men. They worked hard to make shellproofs and reinforce the walls. Each unit was assigned its section to defend. There was little enough time

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to complete arrangements, as bombardment on the Fort began in the morning of May 3rd, the Mexicans having allowed a day for Taylor's main forces to clear. For a while the fire came from a battery located on the city's edge, but it was silenced by the guns from Fort Taylor, and thereafter shot and shell came direct from Matamoros. The fire was valiantly answered. The little force on the American side literally dodged cannon balls. The soldiers must have been very good at this, as only one enlisted man, Sergeant Weigart of the 7th Infantry, was killed, a ball having struck his head five hours after the bombardment commenced.

Sound of the guns firing across the Rio Grande fell heavily upon the ears of Taylor's main forces at Point Isabel and caused great anxiety for the welfare of their comrades at Fort Brown. Although several parties started to that point at the same time, all except Captain Walker returned, reporting the area to be filled with hostile Mexicans. For the second time, this brave officer, with his superior knowledge of the country, became the bearer of important news. He departed Point Isabel on the afternoon of the 3rd and returned at 9:00 A. M. on the 4th. The news he brought from Major Brown was that the Mexicans had opened all their batteries on the Fort at 5:00 A. M. on the 3rd, keeping up a steady fire all day. This had been answered by Lowd's battery, which succeeded

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in putting out of commission all Mexican batteries in sight except one mortar which was too far beneath the parapet to be hit.

Undoubtedly the greatest damage to the Fort was done by what the Americans called "The Battery in the Country," erected by the Mexicans on the night of May 4th. Other batteries were given names and observers would call them out when witnessing their fire, thus enabling the Americans to seek shelter. Fort Taylor's supply of ammunition was limited and the enemy's bursts were not always answered. Toward the end of the attack, the American fire ceased almost altogether.

In spite of the fact that the Fort was several times surrounded, it was not taken. Mexican movements were keenly observed. On one occasion, following an enemy reconnaissance within 800 yards of the bastions, a counter survey was made by Lieutenant Hanson, who, after gaining Major Brown's permission, took the dragoons and bravely issued into the open plain, now so thickly occupied by the enemy. In an hour he returned and reported having witnessed the enemy's location of a new battery at a cross-roads. Later Captain Mansfield and a small party exhibited similar bravery by leaving the Fort to level the traverse, which had been erected by their troops when they first arrived at the Rio Grande. While out they also

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removed some chaparral which had been serving as cover for Mexican sharpshooters.

At one point in the bombardment, the Mexicans either felt themselves the victors, or attempted a bluff, and "offered" Fort Brown an opportunity to surrender. The demand was respectfully declined, and the delegation representing General Arista returned to Matamoros to renew the assault with greater intensity than ever.

On the 6th day of May, the courageous men of the garrison suffered a loss in morale and leadership. While turning for an instant to give directions Major Brown was struck in the right leg by a bursting shell. Although removed at once to the hospital tent, where shortly he underwent amputation above the knee (the operation having been performed, undoubtedly, by Dr. McPhail), the wound proved mortal. Command of the fortification fell to Captain Hawkins, who was a member of the same regiment as his fallen superior. It was he who turned down the Mexican summons to surrender, stating that he did not understand Spanish.

On the fourth day of siege the gallant defenders were beginning to weary considerably. May 7th they had contended with fire from all the batteries, howitzers and mortars which the enemy was able to emplace against Fort Taylor; moreover, the aim of the Mexicans had im-

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proved greatly and on May 7th and 8th over half the shots fired landed within the Fort. At dawn of the 8th the intensity of shelling from Matamoros showed no sign of waning and the outlook for the defenders grew darker. A few hours later, however, a heavy cannonading was heard in the direction of Point Isabel. It was music to the ears of the embattled besieged. Their jubilation continued in spite of the unusually heavy bombarding which occurred all that day, 300 shot and shell being fired before 7 o'clock, at which hour shelling ceased. We know now that General Arista raised the siege to reinforce his own troops for the battle of Palo Alto but this was unknown to the besieged troops in the Fort who by this time were nearly out of ammunition.

By pre-arranged signal the garrison at Fort Brown had notified the main body of the army of the attack when it began. This was done by firing the eighteen-pounders on May 3rd. One can easily imagine the anxiety of the victors at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma as they returned to Fort Brown on the evening of the 9th, driving the enemy back into his "own" territory. And much more readily can he conceive of the rejoicing of the defenders when they heard the news of the two battles. An act similar to the tactics of modern warfare took place when the Fort Brown eighteen-pounders

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were turned on the retreating enemy as they attempted to cross the river to the Mexican side.

While Major Brown's life ebbed he urged his men to do their duty and hold the Fort. (General Taylor had given Brown orders to remain with the stronghold and not take the field.) To say the least, he was warmly admired and highly respected by those who served under his command. His death, at 2:00 P. M. on the 9th, naturally threw a damper on the high spirits experienced by his men on that day of deliverance. Early on the morning of the 10th, General Taylor sent to Matamoros for Latin-American surgeons to render medical aid to the Mexican wounded. He also permitted Mexicans to come across the river to bury their dead.

The next day an exchange of prisoners was arranged. Captain Thornton, Captain Hardee and Lieutenant Kane were returned, along with 53 privates. General Vega, a truly respectable officer of the Mexican artillery, declined a parole, stating that his government would oblige him to fight regardless of what commitment he might make to the American commander.

On May 11th, General Taylor went to Point Isabel to meet Commodore Connor, who, as heretofore mentioned, had come there with his fleet from Vera Cruz to aid the Army of Occupation, especially since he had received word of heavy supplies being sent to Matamoros to aid

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the enemy. This meeting with the Naval Commander was to be quite an ordeal for old "Rough and Ready," as Taylor had been dubbed on account of his tremendous dislike for dress. Cognizant of this characteristic, Connor, unaccompanied, came ashore and approached the army commander's camp in white drilling. Having been notified as to the exact hour of the visit, Taylor had donned a fancy uniform, which had been resurrected from the bottom of an old chest. When the two met, Connor was surprised, and Taylor, perhaps for the first time in his life, was ill at ease to the point of being upset.

General Taylor, accompanied by an escort of dragoons, left Point Isabel for the camp on the Rio Grande early on the 13th. After proceeding but a short distance he met a messenger convoy who informed him that enemy concentrations were occurring at Barrita, a small village on the south side of the Rio Grande near the Gulf. Taylor decided to return to Point Isabel, and upon arrival learned that fresh troops had just arrived from New Orleans, some regulars and volunteers from Louisiana and Alabama, constituting the first answer to his application for additional strength.

On the 14th, Taylor again started for the Rio Grande, accompanied by 600 men, some artillery, and 250 wagonloads of army supplies. At the same time he dispatched Lieuten-

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ant Colonel Wilson with four companies of Federal troops, two companies of Louisiana volunteers, and one company of Alabama volunteers to take Barrita. The Louisiana troops were commanded by Captains I. F. Stockton and G. H. Tobin, and the Alabama company by General (probably an honorary title) R. Desha. Three steamers were detailed to take them across the river, while part of Commodore Connor's fleet went to a point in the gulf, a short distance from the mouth of the Rio Grande. These preparations for conflict went unchallenged, as the Mexican cavalry expected at Barrita did not appear and the natives of the town fled, only to return a little later when Colonel Wilson offered protection to life and property, and a guarantee of the civil and religious rights of non-combatants.

Chapter XI

Matamoros

WHY TAYLOR FAILED to immediately pursue the conquered of Resaca de la Palma across the Rio Grande is a question that must go unanswered (except for Taylor's "lack of boats" excuse). Tacticians, however, criticize him for not doing so, since the delay gave Arista's fleeing army an opportunity to reach the interior of Mexico, and thence to reorganize and fight again. Though he eventually did cross the river, it must be remembered that he had been instructed not to do so unless and until war was declared. This may have deterred him for a few days in the expectation that the turn of events might make crossing unnecessary.

Admittedly, it was difficult to procure boats to move men and equipment across the river, and several days were spent in locating a suf-

Matamoros

ficient number. Other preparations to take Matamoros included the emplacement of 6-inch mortars and the arrival of Wilson's force from Barrita. It was the morning of the 17th, and Colonel Twiggs had already received orders to cross, when Taylor received a call from General Regueña, sent by Arista to arrange an armistice until the United States and Mexican governments could reach a settlement. Taylor replied that in the light of recent events, including Arista's previous refusal of an armistice requested by the American commander, none could now be granted. He also declared the occupation of Matamoros to be a *sine qua non*, allowing Arista and his men to leave the city, but without taking the public supplies. At 3:00 P. M. that day, the hour at which Ragueña had promised, and failed, to return to Taylor with an answer from Arista, the American forces commenced final plans to cross the stream, the last step of which was to encamp in the immediate vicinity of the crossing. On the morning of the 18th, under the protection of two eighteen-pounders and three batteries of artillery, the Army of Occupation moved into Old Mexico. The first unit was a small reconnaissance party of ten selected men, led by Captain Walker of the Texas Rangers and Lieutenant Hays of the 4th Infantry. After their report that no armed Mexicans were near the river, the crossing proceeded and Captain

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Kerr was the first to reach Fort Paredes and raise the Stars and Stripes.

Before the crossing was completed, Bliss arrived with word that Matamoros would surrender unconditionally. This message came from Don Jesus Cardenas, the prefect, or official representative of the city's civil population. Accompanied by Major Craig, Captain Miles, and Lieutenant Britton, Bliss had crossed the river and met the prefect. (A parley was sounded by the above named officers just before our troops started to cross the river. Lieutenant Britton then went over with a white flag and met a deputation from the prefect, stating that General Taylor's adjutant wished to see the civil officer in person. Whereupon the Matamoros group went over, picked up Bliss and staff and took them to the office they were seeking, located on the northwest side of the Plaza. Upon meeting the prefect, Bliss promptly delivered General Taylor's manifesto, which demanded a surrender of the town and all its public stores. Bliss then added verbally that General Taylor had ordered him to guarantee protection of individual rights, respect for religion, and procedure of civil courts of justice unless the latter should interfere with the city's occupation by American troops.) It was necessary for Bliss to demand a reply in positive terms, as the prefect acted and spoke evasively. The next day, when interviewed by Colonel

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Twiggs, the administrative ruler prevaricated by claiming to have no knowledge concerning the location of any public stores of a military nature. He was held in contempt by the people of Matamoros; he was regarded as selfish and odious to the extreme by the American merchants living there, and by the newly arrived conquerors. It was not long until he was ejected from his office and banished from the town.

All went well in the crossing with the exception of an accident which befell Lieutenant Leage Stevens (West Point '43) of the 2nd Dragoons, who was swept from his horse by the river's current while riding at the head of his command. His loss was particularly lamentable because he was a likely young officer, having done excellent work in the engagements of the 8th and 9th. Two days after the accident his body was recovered and placed beside that of Major Brown inside the walls of Fort Brown.

Upon entering Matamoros, the main portion of our troops were billeted in the upper and corner suburbs of the city, while a light guard was placed in the downtown area. Colonel Twiggs was appointed Governor of the town, with headquarters on the river bank. The units of Belknap and Worth were located in the bend below, and opposite them were Captain Walker and his Rangers, easy to find due to the presence of their wiry horses. Westward from Colonel Twigg's command stretched the tents of the

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volunteer regiment, grouped somewhat scatteringly around the Fangues del Raminero. The 7th Regiment was very appropriately placed under the walls of Fort Brown. Finally, General Taylor's headquarters, as befitted an Indian fighter, was established under a few trees slightly higher than the others.

The first night our troops came into Matamoros they were not allowed to "go to town." Later, when visiting the city was permitted, it was, for the most part, carried out in orderly fashion, much to the surprise of the Mexicans, who had expected drunkenness, assault, robbery, rape and pillage. Although "rough stuff" did occasionally occur, punishment followed swiftly. The chief offenders were the volunteers.

Nor did the civil population of Matamoros give General Taylor much trouble. As was to be expected, the citizens tried to hide the public stores and shield them as best they could. But in a few days the bulk of stores had been sought out by Taylor's Ordnance detail and, contrary to the reports from Arista and the prefect, military equipage was found in great abundance.

That Taylor let the fox slip away from the hounds is obvious. Arista and his forces moved out of Matamoros before Taylor took the city. Nevertheless, a pretense was made of pursuing the Mexican army. Colonel Garland, with

Matamoros

Kerr's and May's squadrons, plus Walker's small group of Rangers, after three days journey and a round trip of about 120 miles, returned with 22 prisoners and an ammunition wagon which had been taken from Arista's rear-guard. Thus, Taylor's "attempt" to retrieve what the delay in crossing the Rio Grande had lost him was like chasing the fowl and pulling a few of its tail feathers after letting it fly the coop.

The Army of Occupation remained at Matamoros long enough to rest and receive reinforcements. Many volunteers, mostly from the southern states, hastened to the seat of conflict. By the middle of June, 1846, Taylor found himself in command of approximately 9000 men. Of this force, 750 men were stationed at Barrita and 500 at Point Isabel. The others were at Matamoros.

The chief reason given by Taylor for not proceeding toward the interior of Mexico before that country had an opportunity to prepare itself for another fight was lack of transportation, as it was not until the latter part of August that this was provided in any degree of adequacy. By this time the Mexicans had reinforced and reorganized their army. Santa Anna, the Mexican general whom Sam Houston had so unwisely let go following the battle of San Jacinto, had prepared himself for his famous stand at Buena Vista. It is recognized

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that had Taylor been expeditious enough to meet Santa Anna on the other side of San Luis, he would have been possessed of the metropolis of Monterrey earlier—probably before the stronghold became heavily built up with the Republic's resources.

On September 7, 1846, Taylor departed Matamoros, advancing toward Cerralvo, from which point he subsequently marched to Monterrey. General Patterson was left in charge of the few troops at Matamoros, and the handful left to guard the supply depots.

Chapter XII

The Civil War Period

IN THE YEAR immediately following General Taylor's departure from Fort Brown, use of the place was quite limited, except as an occasional supply base. The Fort saw little activity for the next 15 years or until the Civil War.

Quietude at Fort Brown has always been unpopular with the residents of Brownsville. There are political as well as economic reasons for this, but it is also true, even to this day, that the civilians of the town live in a state of uneasiness when the troops are away. Formerly they were afraid of attack from Indians and Mexican banditti, of later years from revolutionaries.

Early in the year 1859 the Fort was actually abandoned for the first time, and the people of the town were subjected to many acts of

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violence, including four murders, committed by organized Mexican desperadoes, who retired upon threat of Mexican soldiers, stationed in Matamoros, who came to the rescue. In response to appeals for protection, Fort Brown was occupied in the autumn of the same year, by order of the Secretary of War, and on December 5th of that year a Major Heintzelman arrived at the garrison with federal troops, joining forces with some Rangers and Brownsville citizens to drive out a disturbing element led by Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, who had been a member of Arista's command at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma.

Evacuation took place again peaceably on March 20, 1861, when the Federal troops were given an opportunity to depart the Texas border and coast in lieu of being held prisoners by southern forces. The evacuees were allowed to take food and incidental supplies when they departed but were directed to leave behind their munitions. They declined to do this, but succeeded in getting away with only a small portion. They were obliged to burn part of the ordnance at the Brazos, and some of the stores were captured there by Texas volunteers, who subsequently moved into Fort Brown.

In 1862 the Confederate strength at Fort Brown consisted of four companies of cavalry, numbering 404 men. They remained under the command of Colonel John S. Ford, until

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relieved by General H. P. Bee, who arrived January 29, 1863.

On November 1st and 2nd, 1863 a federal force, under the command of Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, disembarked at Brazos de Santiago. The command consisted of the Second Division, 13th Army Corps, the 13th and 15th Regiments of the Maine Volunteers; the First Texas Cavalry, the 1st Engineers and the 16th Negro Infantry. These organizations had a combined strength of 6,998 men. The First Brigade was under Brigadier General William Vandeyer; Colonel William E. Dye was in charge of the second.

On the afternoon of November 2, General Bee was informed regarding the landing of the large Federal detachment at Point Isabel. The largest armed aggregation he could have mustered would not have exceeded 1200, so Bee decided at once to leave.²⁹ On the afternoon of the next day, he fired all government buildings, burned over 200 bales of cotton and threw more into the river, then set out for Santa Gertrudis (Kingsville).

The fire spread, and destroyed a block of property in Brownsville. An explosion of 8,000 pounds of powder shook all the buildings and frightened the women and children. While large

²⁹ Frank Cushman Pierce, *A Brief History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley*, p. 41.

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quantities of food and quartermaster supplies were destroyed, a quickly organized home guard saved some of the Confederate property, and assisted in restoring order.

The Union forces moved into Fort Brown, barely allowing time for departure of Bee's men. They remained in control of the garrison until July 30, 1864, when the Confederates regained the Post. Aside from occasional guerrilla warfare, the troops on both sides experienced only limited fighting until the last battle of the Civil War.

Had modern means of transportation and communication existed in the Spring of 1865 this final engagement of the Conflict between the States would never have taken place. For on April 9, 1865 General Robert E. Lee and his army surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomatox, Virginia. In the absence of telegraphic signals south of New Orleans, word did not reach Fort Brown until May 18th of that year. In the meantime a battle was fought near Fort Brown, more than a month after the Confederacy had surrendered and the war was officially over.

A most detailed description of the last battle of the Civil War is found in Pierce's *History of The Lower Rio Grande Valley* (pp. 52-54):

On May 1, 1865, the total Federal forces in Cameron County, Texas, under Brigadier General E. B. Brown, consisted of 1,915, as follows: of the 66th U. S. Colored

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Infantry, 675; 34th Indiana Infantry, 300; 2nd Texas Cavalry (Union), 250, of whom 50 were unmounted; and of the 46th U. S. Colored Infantry, 490.

On May 11, 1865, by order of Colonel Theodore H. Barrett, in command, Lieutenant Colonel David Branson left Brazos Santiago for Point Isabel with 250 men. A severe gale prevented the little steamer from proceeding to the Point, so the troops returned to Brazos and marched southward along the Brazos beach to Boca Chica, a narrow inlet from the Gulf, about 3 miles north of the mouth of the Rio Grande. Fifty men of the 2nd Texas (Union), not mounted, First Lieutenant Hancock and Second Lieutenant James, joined them with 50 men and the 300, at 2 a. m., May 12, surrounded White's Ranch, believing that a Confederate outpost of 65 men were camped there.

The Federal forces hid in a thicket on the banks of the Rio Grande about $11\frac{1}{2}$ miles above White's Ranch until 8:30 a. m., May 12, when Mexican and French soldiers of the Imperial Army on the Mexican shore gave the alarm and warned the Confederates.

The Confederates, 190 men under Capt. W. N. Robinson of Gidding's Battalion, immediately began an attack but were forced to retreat. The Federals captured three prisoners, two horses, four beef cattle, and ten days' rations. That afternoon at 3 o'clock, General Slaughter and Colonel John S. (Rip) Ford, with about 600 men commanded by Captain D. M. Wilson and a section of O. G. Jones' light artillery, arrived on the scene, but very little fighting was done, the Federals retiring to White's Ranch for the night. From White's Ranch, Colonel Branson sent a message to Lieutenant Colonel Barrett, commanding the post at Brazos Santiago, who at daybreak of the thirteenth, with 200 men of the 34th Indiana Volunteer Infantry appeared. The Federals succeeded in getting as far as Palmetto Ranch about 12 miles east of Brownsville, where they dug pits.

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Afterwards they fell back a mile and a half to a bluff then 11 miles from the mouth of the river but which has long since disappeared.

At four p. m. the Confederates began an active advance and endeavored to get between the hills (a mile back from the river) and the mouth, to flank the Federals. They planted two cannon on Palmetto Hill and with these began the actual battle of the day. The Federals, under Captains Miller and Coffin and Lieutenants Foster and Mead retreated.

At about five o'clock, the 34th Indiana broke and retreated at double time. The Federals lost 7 Enfield rifles and accoutrements and some camp and garrison equipage. They also lost four officers and 111 men, 30 of whom were killed and some drowned in attempting to swim the river into Mexico. The Federals in full retreat reached Boca Chica at eight p. m.

Negro Ex-Troops Raid Bagdad

Today there are very few Negroes in the Rio Grande Delta. One reason for this dates back to an incident which took place on the morning of January 6, 1866. Early that day a Colonel Crawford, who had been mustered out of the service, and was in charge of 300 blacks who also had been relieved by the government, entered the town of Bagdad, overpowered the French Imperialist soldiers who at that time were responsible for order there, then proceeded to get drunk, following which they raped, murdered and robbed at large. Much of the loot was carried back to the Texas side. Although the casualties numbered eight Americans (including

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two women), the colored men were never apprehended or punished for their deeds.

General Sheridan's Railroad

In May of 1865 Major General Phil H. Sheridan proceeded from the Nation's Capitol to Fort Brown with the 25th Army Corps, arriving the following month.

General Grant's purpose in ordering Sheridan to the border was that of preventing an attempt on the part of the Confederates to obtain help from Maximilian,³⁰ the Austrian who had with force been established as emperor in Mexico, and thus renew the struggle between the states. Although such a scheme had been thought of its actual promulgation would likely never have occurred. Sheridan, finding little or no evidence thereof, commenced at once to busy his men

³⁰ For over a century there had been a conflict in Mexico between the Liberals, or Republicans, on the one hand, and the Nobles, wealthy classes and conservative ecclesiastics on the other. In 1860 the Liberals came into power, under the leadership of Juarez. His reform laws included postponement of foreign loan payments and confiscations of church property valued at \$400,000.00 and more than one third of the real estate. Spain, England, and France immediately presented claims, but satisfactory settlement was made with only two of those nations. France, remaining unappeased, declared War in 1862, and in 1863 placed Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph, archduke of Austria, on the throne of Mexico at the instigation of Napoleon III. French troops arrived in Mexico June 5, 1863. Maximilian was overthrown, tried and executed in May and June of 1867. Juarez was elected president of Mexico again in August of that year, and the Imperial forces departed immediately.

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with constructive occupation, the nature of which was the result of an observation made upon his arrival at the Brazos. He saw how difficult it was to land troops at the Grande's mouth, the water on the bar at Bagdad and Clarksville being only 9 to 11 feet deep on the average. He therefore built a narrow-gauge railway, running the entire length of Brazos Island, then through Boca Chica on the mainland over to a place on the Rio known at that time as White's Ranch. The line was in operation for several years following the war. After that the rails were removed, but the old road grade remains to this day.

War Time Prosperity

During the early part of the War Between the States, hundreds of union sympathizers came to Matamoros as announced neutrals. While some of these were able to obtain transportation to New Orleans for enlistment in the Union Army, many others, joined by deserters from both sides, made their homes in Matamoros, Bagdad and even Clarksville. In addition to those who fled to these towns to avoid bearing arms, thousands of gamblers, peddlers and swindlers flocked in. This motley aggregation was further added to by French, Austrian, Belgian and Mexican soldiers whose intermittent as well as long-term visits contributed much to

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the melee. The following excerpts are descriptive:

During the same period Matamoros increased in population to 60,000 and Brownsville with Cameron County, to over 25,000.

The cosmopolitan city of Bagdad was a veritable Babel, a Babylon, a whirlpool of business, pleasure and sin. A common laborer could easily gain from five to six dollars per day, while a man who owned a skiff or a lighter could make from twenty to forty dollars. The saloon and hotel keepers were reaping an abundant harvest. The Gulf, for three or four miles out, was literally a forest of masts. Ten stages were running daily between Matamoros and Bagdad.³¹

Brazos Santiago was the only harbor of any note between Indianola, Texas and Tampico, Mexico, and Matamoros had for a long time held a monopoly on goods consigned to the mining districts of northern Mexico, before the war added to its volume of business. Another Brownsville citizen has left this record of the operations along the Rio Grande during the Civil War:

During the late war, this like other Southern harbors, was blockaded by the naval forces of the United States. But vessels cleared from northern ports and Europe for Matamoros, anchored off the mouth of the Rio Grande,

³¹ Florence Johnson Scott, *Old Rough and Ready On The Rio Grande*, pp. 107 and 108, quoting Parisot, Rev. P. F., *The Reminiscences of a Texas Missionary*, 55, 56.

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and discharged their freight by the help of lighters at the mouth of the river on the Mexican side.

While Brownsville was in the hands of the United States troops, these goods were taken higher up the river and crossed above the Federal lines and from there taken into Texas. The trains of wagons which took the goods into Texas brought back freights of cotton and the vessels which came from New York and Liverpool loaded with goods, took freights of cotton back on their return trip. Thus fully one hundred ship cargoes of goods were supplied to the rebels every month and a vastly profitable trade was carried on by the Rio Grande merchants. These gigantic and remunerative ventures virtually running around the blockade, amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars; and while it multiplied the fortunes of the millionaires, it went far toward relieving the necessities of the rebel armies and people.³²

Not only was this harbor used for entering the goods, but many Confederate officers with a price on their heads found it was the only possible way of returning to the South if they were once caught outside the bounds of the Confederacy.

³² Scott, op. cit., p. 108, quoting from *Kingsbury Papers* (Mrs.)

Chapter XIII

General Development

SHERIDAN'S "ARMY OF OCCUPATION" numbered 50,000 men. Headquarters were at Fort Brown, but various units were located at stations along the Texas coast and Mexican border. Supplies for the troops came by boat. Mustering out occurred gradually, and by the close of the year 1867 the volunteers were all gone, leaving only a few hundred regulars at the Post.

Buildings, Grounds and Title

Toward the end of the year 1865 several temporary buildings were erected at Fort Brown. In 1867, Captain Wainwright, Q.M.C., went to the Post to construct 70 permanent buildings. They were completed in 1870 at a cost of approximately \$150,000.00. In this year there were four companies of infantry, one

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of cavalry, and two of artillery, at the Post.

The 1867 building program received a reverse immediately after it was started. In the spring of that year a hurricane visited Brownsville and demolished all the buildings at the Fort, including an unfinished one of the new permanent type. Until new barracks were finished the troops were quartered in town.

The strongest and most impressive structure was the Hospital, made ready for use about May 1, 1869. It is of attractive yellow-tan brick, two-story, Spanish style and is still in use.

The Fort Brown reservation consists of 358½ acres located on the left bank of the Rio Grande. It is less than 25 feet above sea level. Entrance to the Post is one block from Brownsville's business section. Matamoros, Mexico is one mile distant across the Rio Grande.

Acquirement of title to the reservation required many years, representing one of the longest legal struggles on record. High points in the litigation included the following:³³ (a) The Wainwright investigation, January 4, 1869; (b) Appropriation by Congress of a sum of money to enable the Secretary of War to acquire a good and valid title and to pay and extinguish all claims for the use and occupancy of the property, March 3, 1885; (c) Opinion

³³ George W. Davis, in *Pamphlets, Legal Claims, etc.*

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of Attorney-General approving title, dated December 22, 1887; (d) The Fort Brown case in the Fifty-Third Congress—Tenth consideration, September 25, 1893.

The tract was claimed by the heirs of one Cavazos, under an old Spanish grant, and also by the corporate city of Brownsville. The Government rested its claim on the ground of possession since 1846, at which time the title was thought to have been in Mexico. Eventually the matter was adjudicated by the Supreme Court of the United States.

In 1911 the Secretary of the Interior assumed charge of the grounds, and stationed thereon a caretaking detachment. This arrangement terminated when the Post was subsequently re-occupied by troops.

Health and Sanitation

The general health (or lack of it) of the personnel at Fort Brown from 1868 to the end of the century is reflected in the following quotations:

The general sanitary condition of the post during the past year was excellent, the principal diseases being diarrhoea, intermittent and remittent fever, venereal diseases, a few cases of rheumatism and pulmonary complaints, and, after pay-day, some cases of delirium tremens. I believe that most of the cases of diarrhoea are produced by some excess in either eating or drinking, and that also by the water. The rise in the Rio Grande

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generally takes place about the end of June. For the few months previous to this, the water being very low, is much saturated with salts, principally sulphate of lime, when it is by no means palatable. The water in the lagoon, by evaporation and soakage through the bank between it and the river (the bed of the river being much lower than that of the lagoon), also becomes very low, so that a by no means pleasant odor arises from those portions of it covered over with water in the winter and now dry. These two causes, I believe, give rise to intermittent fever and diarrhoea. General Clitz, fully alive to this source of danger from the lagoon, causes about 40,000 gallons of water to be pumped into it every day from the river, which makes up for the loss by evaporation. There is a much less number of intermittent cases treated this spring than were treated for the corresponding portion of last year. The occurrence of a sudden "norther" brings a few cases of pulmonary complaints, mostly catarrh and slight bronchitis; but I think this climate is very favorable for some cases of pulmonary disease. Cases of phthisis, where there is little expectoration, would be benefitted, while to some other cases of the same disease it would be a constant source of torment, and certain death. It is also very unfavorable for rheumatic diseases. There being excessive heat it is also very debilitating to weak constitutions, and few persons of this kind remain perfectly well during the summer months.³⁴

EXHIBIT "C"

SANITARY CONDITION OF FORT BROWN³⁵

Extract from the Report of the Committee on Military

³⁴ William J. Wilson, in Circular No. 4, War Dept., Surgeon General's Office, Washington, Dec. 5, 1870, *A Report on Barracks and Hospitals*.

³⁵ Davis, op. cit.

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Affairs. (H. R. Report No. 2050, Fifty-second Congress, first session, July 25, 1892.)

The sanitary condition of Fort Brown is well set forth in the following extract from the Annual Report of the Surgeon-General, U. S. Army, for the year 1889, page 32:

"Surgeon J. C. Bailey, medical director, Department of Texas, in forwarding a sanitary report from Fort Brown, Texas, remarked:

" 'During the month of November, 1888, 58 per cent of the command at Fort Brown was taken on sick report for the intermittent fever alone. This does not fully represent the ill health of the command. On an inspection of the post, February 24, 1889, when the number of admissions had fallen much below that of November, I found members of nearly all the officers' families suffering with some form of malarial troubles. I was informed that many of the men, when suffering from chills, preferred continuing on duty to reporting sick. The washed-out appearance of nearly every soldier in the command plainly showed the unhealthful surroundings. This post is closely hemmed in on the north by a large town (5,000 or 6,000) which is practically undrained and filthy beyond description; on the east by a marsh, and south by a lagoon which for 8 months of the year is cut off from the river. Into this marsh and lagoon the sewage of the post drains. The lagoon is within 30 feet of the officers' quarters, and the marsh crowds up on occupied buildings on the other side. There must be taken into account the probability of the command being hemmed in by a yellow fever quarantine. It will be a mild epidemic that does not decimate it in its present condition. If this unwholesome spot must be occupied I can only recommend that the garrison be reduced to the minimum and entirely changed every year.' "

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The Surgeon-General of the Army, in the same report, page 27, says:

"At Fort Brown, which must be set down as the most unhealthy post in the country, 286 cases of malarial disease, or nearly two attacks yearly for each man of the garrison, added 1,986.11 to the admission rate and 26.72 to the noneffectives.

"These fevers alone give this post a much higher rate of admission than was given to the Army by all diseases and injuries."

The Surgeon-General, in his report for 1890, says (p. 25):

"The posts which have the highest rates of admission in the Army are Fort Brown, 3,710; Fort McPherson, 3,417; Willets Point, 2,338; Little Rock Barracks, 2,379; and Columbus Barracks, 2,319. Those having the highest rate of nonefficiency are Fort Brown, 114.44; Columbus Barracks, 92.74; Little Rock Barracks, 84.82; Fort McPherson, 72.80, and Fort Logan, 70.78. Fort Brown is thus seen to have the worst record of any post in the Army. The nature of the prevailing diseases has already been mentioned. This post held the same unenviable position in 1888 and 1889, but before that time, although it has had always a large noneffective rate from sickness, several of the posts exceeded it, as for instance Jefferson Barracks in 1885 to 1887, Columbus Barracks in 1884 and 1885, Fort Grant in 1887, Forts Davis and Robinson in 1886, and Jackson Barracks in 1884."

And again, on page 37, same report:

"If Fort Brown, Texas, were expunged from the list of military stations the prevalence of malarial disease in our Army would be greatly reduced. That post had an admission rate of 1,676 per thousand of strength and 38.58 of noneffectiveness. Fort Sill, Ind.T., took second place as regards admission, 692; but the cases were light, giving only 7.85 of nonefficiency, while Fort Reno, Ind.T., gave 21.93, and Little Rock Barracks

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10.79; both with relatively fewer admissions than Fort Sill. These are the notably malarious posts of our Army, although there is yet room for considerable improvements in the rates of Fort Gibson, Ind.T.; Columbus Barracks, Ohio; Fort Clark, Texas, and Jefferson Barracks, Mo."

(Pages 75-77)

MALARIAL DISEASES

Only a few years ago malarial disease constituted the prime factor in the constitution of the sick reports of our Army. Today it occupies a minor position, except at certain posts. The admission rate for the Army amounts to only 62.23 with 1.58 noneffective per thousand of strength as compared with 92.93 admission and 2.79 noneffective in 1890 and with 120 and 3.25 in 1889. Twenty years ago there were as many cases of malarial disease at many of our military stations as there are now of all diseases, injuries included. Drainage and sewage, pure water supplies, improved quarters, and the abandonment of insalubrious localities have effected this gratifying result. Nevertheless Fort Sill, Okla., continues to give 546.05 admissions per thousand with 10.03 constantly sick, and Fort Reno, Okla., 456.95 with 10.42. Washington Barracks, D. C., takes third place with 348.40, but only 6 constantly sick. Camp at Oklahoma, Okla., takes fourth place in prevalence, 333.33, but third in noneffectiveness, 9.24. Fort Brown, Texas, which had formerly a notorious record for malarial disease has now only a nominal rate. In 1889 the admission rate was 1,675.86 with 38.58 constantly sick; in 1890, 325.91 with 8.32 and last year 16.13 with 0.35. This extraordinary record can be attributed only to the use of cool distilled water from the ice machines. The twentieth post in the order of prevalence had in 1889 an admission rate of 189.19, in 1890 131.14, and in

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1891 96.18. The reduction of the rates of these diseases is thus seen to be general.

* * * * *

In the report from this office for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1890, which summarizes the statistics of sickness at our military posts during the calendar year 1889, the remark was made (p.37) that were Fort Brown, Texas, expunged from the list of our military stations the prevalence of malarial disease in our Army would be greatly reduced. Fort Brown has not been abandoned, but its malarial record has been expunged, with a consequent material lessening of the malarial rate of the Army. During the calendar year 1889 the post had an admission rate for malarial diseases of 1,676 and a noneffective rate of 38.58 per thousand of strength. During the year 1891 the corresponding rates were 16.13 and 0.35. This change which practically alters the status of Fort Brown from that of the most unhealthy to one of the most healthy garrisons in the Army, has been accomplished solely by the use of a pure water for drinking obtained from a steam-condensing coil connected with the ice machine. Distilled water was introduced in 1890 and the extraordinary change in the health of the garrison can be attributed to nothing else than to its use; for the other sanitary conditions and surroundings of the post remain as they were during the year of insalubrity and high rates.

* * * * *

Extract from the Annual Report of the Surgeon-General, for the year ending June 30, 1893.

Fort Brown, Texas, continued free from malarial diseases during the year. The following letter from the post surgeon, Capt. George H. Torney, to the post adjutant, April 2, 1893, gives in full the views of the medical officer on the gratifying improvement recently effected in the health of this garrison:

"In compliance with instructions received from the

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commanding officer directing me to submit for the consideration of the brigadier-general commanding the Department of Texas, now present at the post, a brief and succinct report regarding the causes which have led to the large reduction in the percentage of the sick list of Fort Brown since 1889, in which year it was reported by the Surgeon-General of the Army to have been the most unhealthy post in the country, I have respectfully to state as my opinion that the improvement in the health and efficiency of this command is due in a large measure—

“(1) To the use by the enlisted men of the command, during the whole of the year, of pure drinking water cooled by a liberal supply of ice to make it palatable.

“(2) To the suspension of drills and severe fatigue duty during the period of excessive hot weather—that is, from the 1st of May to the 31st of October of each year.

“(3) To the wearing during the hot season of lightweight clothing and straw hats suitable to the almost tropical climate.

“(4) To the temperance of the men of the command, due in itself a large measure to the fact that there is always in the barracks plenty of cool water to refresh them after returning from outside duty; thus avoiding in a large degree the temptation to resort to cool alcoholic stimulants to relieve thirst and fatigue, which so quickly follow exertion in this climate.

“(5) To the correction, as far as possible, of every observed sanitary defect of the post, and

“(6) To the deficiency of the annual average precipitation of rain during the last three years.

“To these headings may be added the statement that when a soldier is admitted to the post hospital for medical treatment, he is kept under observation until it is believed that he is entirely well and free from the effects of the disease, in order to prevent the possibility

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of a relapse, no matter what may be the disability, as it has been observed that convalescence is not easily established in sick patients in this climate and extends beyond the period ordinarily considered necessary to restore perfect health in other parts of the country." (Pages 77-91)

FORT BROWN, TEXAS

Admissions to sick report and deaths, expressed in ratios per 1,000 mean strength. Years 1868 to 1892, inclusive. (Compiled from the records of the Surgeon-General's Office)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Mean Strength</i>	<i>Admis- sions</i>	<i>Deaths</i>
1868.....	320	4,362.49	40.62
1869.....	306	2,212.42	16.34
1870.....	320	1,670.19	25.00
1871.....	227	1,819.38	26.43
1872.....	246	3,284.55	8.13
1873.....	342	3,073.10	8.77
1874.....	295	2,871.18	-----
1875.....	274	1,405.69	24.91
1876.....	372	2,828.80	10.87
1877.....	434	1,682.02	11.52
1878.....	383	1,785.90	7.83
1879.....	406	2,357.14	4.92
1880.....	305	2,383.60	16.39
1881.....	325	3,648.15	12.35
1882.....	318	2,911.95	31.45
1883.....	96	2,375.00	31.25
1884.....	99	2,646.46	10.10
1885.....	127	2,180.11	15.78
1886.....	148	1,797.30	13.51
1887.....	132	1,580.33	7.58
1888.....	144	3,812.50	6.94
1889.....	145	3,710.34	20.69

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1890.....	135	1,881.49	7.41
1891.....	62	790.32	-----
1892.....	59	576.27	33.90

MEMORANDUM

The records show that there was an epidemic of cholera at Fort Brown in 1866, from August to December, with 47 cases and 15 deaths; also an epidemic of yellow fever in 1867, with 4 cases and no deaths.

The records also show an epidemic of yellow fever at that post during the months of August, September, October, and November 1882, with 36 cases and 3 deaths. No other epidemic, either of cholera or yellow fever, is shown as having been prevalent at Fort Brown during the period covered by the tabulated statement herewith.

S. AND M. DIV., S.G.O., November 8, 1893.

POST HOSPITAL, FORT BROWN, TEXAS,
October 22, 1893.

Capt. GEORGE W. DAVIS,
Fourteenth Infantry, present:

SIR: In compliance with your verbal request of this date for a brief report of the type of diseases at this post during the six weeks I have been on duty here, I have the honor to submit the following:

Nineteen men have been admitted to the hospital during that period, with the following diseases:

Six cases of "Texas fever" (so called).

Six cases of venereal disease.

Three injuries (accidental).

Two cases of diarrhea (acute).

One case of rheumatism (muscular, subacute).

One case of anaemia.

The average strength of the command during this period has been 112 officers and men.

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As is well known, September is the most trying month in this latitude. I was stationed at Fort Clark, Texas, in September, 1891, and Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in September, 1892, and my recollection is that the percentage of diseases justly attributable to the climate was at least as great, if not greater, at each of these posts as it has been here.

Very respectfully, your obedient,

WM. B. DAVIS,
Captain and Assistant Surgeon,
U. S. Army, Post Surgeon.

FORT BROWN, TEXAS, October 28, 1893.
Extracts from report of Capt. George H. Torney, assistant surgeon, U. S. Army, made in compliance with General Orders, No. 5, current series, Adjutant-General's Office, so far as it relates to the sanitary condition and healthfulness of Fort Brown, Texas.

* * * * *

"The climate of the region in which Fort Brown is situated is semi-tropical, the mean maximum temperature being disagreeable to endure except when tempered by strong winds from the gulf, although it provides the conditions necessary for the growth and fruition of several semi-tropical crops that can be profitably cultivated under the torrid heat that prevails from March to November.

"The atmosphere is charged with from 8 to 10 grains of aqueous vapor to each cubic foot of air, a condition that frequently makes the heat more than oppressive, especially when there is a suspension in the summer season of the southeast wind, which is the prevailing breeze during all the months of the year. There is practically no winter in this part of the valley of the Rio Grande, the lowering of temperature from July to January being gradual. The mean temperature for Fort

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Brown deducted from the record for thirty-six years is 58.60 F. for January, and 83.80 F. for July. The occasional sudden winds from the north during the winter months, called "northers" are usually hailed with satisfaction by the officers and troops situated in the garrison and the English-speaking element of the community in the adjacent city of Brownsville as a welcome, health-giving tonic, purifying the atmosphere and stimulating personal activity.

* * * * *

PRECIPITATION, RAINS ONLY

"In this region rain falls about once in four or five days from August to March, and about once in six days during the other months in the year. The maximum frequency of rainy days is about one day in three, and occurs during September after the crops have matured; while the minimum of one rainy day in nine is in April. The region of the Lower Rio Grande Valley is subject to local droughts, more or less extended, and has a mean annual rainfall of 31.52 inches, with 28 per cent variability. The annual depth of possible evaporation of water at Fort Brown is 37 inches.

"In this valley the sun shines about two-thirds of the time in summer and more than half the time in winter.

* * * * *

"The adjacent city of Brownsville, which is the county seat of Cameron County, Texas, has, according to the census of 1890, a population of 6,020 people, mostly Mexicans. It is laid out in square blocks and with wide streets on an almost flat surface of ground. The water supply of the town is obtained from private cisterns connected with the roofs of the houses and by means of numerous water carts from the river, and is very defective. The houses of the main streets of the city are well built, many of the residences being orna-

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mental structures, but those occupied by a large portion of the Mexican population are wretched hovels called "jacales," scarcely fit for human habitation. There is no public system of sewerage or drainage in the city, and as a consequent condition nearly all the refuse and excrementitious matter from the houses in the localities occupied by the lower order of Mexicans is spread upon adjacent streets to the detriment of the health of the whole community.

* * * * *

"The water supply of the post for all purposes except drinking and cooking is obtained by pumping from the Rio Grande. It is forced by steam pump into three storage and settling tanks, each having a capacity of about 15,000 gallons, from which it is distributed without filtration by pipes to the quarters of the garrison. Each one of these tanks is emptied every third day, which allows a sufficient time for the settling of the mud, except during the periods of flood in the river. The water thus obtained is sufficient in quantity for the requirements of the garrison of two troops of cavalry. No statement of the result of a quantitative analysis of the water of the Rio Grande is obtainable. It is, however, a very inferior article, as it is highly alkaline, being saturated with the salts of lime, and has a disagreeable, nauseous taste. During the period of flood it is filled with organic detritus, while for many weeks in May and June, and in August and September, it may be considered as liquid mud, which upon becoming stagnant undergoes decomposition, giving off very offensive odors.

"Each storage tank has a 5-inch washout pipe in the bottom, and is cleaned regularly every week during the stage of high water in the river and at other times every two weeks. The water for drinking and cooking is obtained by condensation of the exhaust steam of the ice machine, in which wax is used as a cylinder lubricant after it has passed through an oil eliminator and a char-

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coal filter, which is frequently renewed. Only two days' supply of this distilled water is kept on hand for use. This article may be considered a pure drinking water, and is distributed daily to the garrison in almost unlimited quantities by a special cart for the purpose stated. It is believed that the decrease of malarial diseases at this post, for which it was in 1888 and 1889 so notorious, may in a large degree be ascribed to the use of this water for culinary and drinking purposes.

* * * * *

"An ice plant was first installed in the post in 1887, but having been put under the charge of an incompetent engineer it was wrecked in less than two years from the time it was started; a new engine and compressor was furnished in 1890, and a gradual replacement of the worn parts of the old apparatus began. This process has been completed and the machine is now in perfect running order, with a capacity of 3,000 pounds of ice in twenty-four hours, which is sufficient to supply all the requirements of the garrison, even in the event of an epidemic of yellow fever, to which this post is at any time liable, because of its proximity to the infected parts of the coast of Mexico. As the ice is made from fresh, filtered, distilled water, there is no apparent possibility of its being contaminated by extraneous sources of infection. The value and comfort resulting from the use of ice in this torrid region by the whole garrison is unquestionably very great.

"The surface drainage of rain water from the depressions in the flat plain on which Fort Brown is built is accomplished by three shallow ditches, which carry it to the lagoon in the rear of the officers' quarters. There is no system of the subsoil drainage in the post, the height and the fluctuation of the subsoil water being governed by the water level of the Rio Grande. When the river is high for several weeks the water therefrom permeates the soil and can be found at 8 or 10 feet from

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the surface; when the river is shallow this water draws off to its level. There is no sewerage system at the post, the excreta being disposed of in a very satisfactory manner by the earth-closet method; the privy cans and their contents are removed daily from the closets, taken to the river bank below the post, the contents emptied in the river, and the cans thoroughly washed, after which they are left in the sun and air to dry and purify, to be replaced in the closets next day. It is not believed that this system can be improved under the present conditions at Fort Brown, but if the reservation is ever purchased by the Government, then a new sewerage and drainage system, with a depositing reservoir near the quartermaster's boiler room and a steam pulsometer to pump the sewage into the river below the post, should be constructed.

"All garbage, refuse, ashes, etc., other than excreta, are deposited in barrels and boxes at the rear of each set of quarters and barracks, and removed daily to the dumping ground at the lower end of the post, and then thrown into the river. The location of this dumping bank is very favorable to the disposition of all such refuse. This method is very effective, and the only feasible one under the present conditions of Fort Brown.

* * * * *

"The health of the men of the command serving at Fort Brown during the past two years has been very satisfactory. The ratio per thousand of strength for admission to the sick report affords an illustrative example of the value of preventive measures in medicine. During the calendar year of 1889, the post had an admission rate of 1,676, and a noneffective rate of 38.58 per thousand of strength for malarial diseases alone; for the year 1892, these rates were zero, the last case of malarial disease at the post having been treated in August, 1891.

* * * * *

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"In 1889-1892 smallpox prevailed as an epidemic in Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico, and the two adjacent cities, but the disease was not introduced into the post, as every individual in the garrison was vaccinated and revaccinated with bovine virus until it was considered almost a certainty that full protection against the variola had been secured. The venereal diseases excepted, no contagious affections have been introduced into the garrison from the vicinity of the post. Only one case of alcoholism was admitted to the sick report during the calendar year of 1892, which may be considered a remarkably low percentage, in view of the conditions surrounding the post of Fort Brown."

GEO. H. TORNEY,
Captain and Assistant Surgeon,
U. S. Army, Post Surgeon

A true copy:
(Signed)

W. B. DAVIS,
Captain and Assistant Surgeon, U. S. Army.

It is worth mentioning that Captain Torney later became Surgeon General of the Army (1912-16).

**CONSOLIDATED SICK-REPORT,
FORT BROWN, TEXAS,³⁶
(white troops) 1870-1874**

Year	1870-71	1871-72	1872-73	1873-74				
Mean strength—								
Officers	15	11	16*	17‡				
Enlisted men	306	191	108	1§				
DISEASES	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths
General Diseases, A								
Remittent fever	46		25		10		5	
Intermittent fever	120		60		12		1	
Dengue					102			
Other diseases of this group	3		7		6		3	
General Diseases, B								
Rheumatism	53		26		26			
Syphilis	74		25		25			
Consumption			3	1	1	2		
Other diseases of this group	1		1	1				
Local Diseases								
Catarrh and bronchitis	29		7		38		3	
Pneumonia	3	1	1					
Pleurisy					3			
Diarrhoea and dysentery	67	2	64		67			
Hernia	1		5		1			
Gonorrhoea	9		13		14			
Other local diseases	123	1	87		94		3	
Alcoholism	19		19	1	5			
Total Disease	548	4	343	3	404	2	17	
VIOLENT DISEASES AND DEATHS								
Gunshot wounds	1		1		2			
Drowning				1				
Other accidents and Injuries	44		55		45		1	
Total violence	45		56	1	47		1	

*Ten months only, officers. ‡Eight months only, officers.

§Four months only, enlisted men.

36 William J. Wilson, in Circular No. 8, War Dept. Surgeon General's Office, Washington, May 1, 1875, *A Report On The Hygiene Of The United States Army*.

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CONSOLIDATED SICK-REPORT, FORT BROWN, TEXAS,³⁷ (colored troops) 1872-'74

Year.....	1872-73*	1873-74		
Mean strength—Enlisted men.....	237	266		
Diseases				
General Diseases, A.				
	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths
Small-pox and varioloid	1		1	
Remittent fever	19		24	
Intermittent fever	9		28	
Dengue	29			
Other diseases of this group.....	12		46	
General Diseases, B.				
Rheumatism	65		93	
Syphilis	77		121	
Consumption		1		1
Local Diseases.				
Catarrh and bronchitis	94		130	
Pneumonia	1		1	
Pleurisy	2			
Diarrhoea and dysentery	73		132	
Hernia			5	
Gonorrhoea	99		72	
Other local diseases	145		211	
Unclassified				
Total disease	626	1	864	1
Violet Diseases and Deaths				
Gunshot wounds			3	
Other accidents and injuries	48		58	
Homicide				1
Total violence	48		61	1

*Ten months only; first report September, 1872.

³⁷ Wilson, op. cit., Circular No. 8.

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METEOROLOGICAL REPORT, FORT BROWN, TEXAS³⁸ 1870-1874

Month	1870-'71		Rain- fall in Min. inches		1871-'72		Rain- fall in Min. inches	
	Temperature Mean	Max.			Temperature Mean	Max.		
	•	•	•		•	•	•	
July	84.39	94*	70*	0.75	84.15	94*	71*	0.40
Aug.	83.81	94*	70*	0.10	83.76	97*	72*	1.40
Sept.	81.26	95*	64*	2.53	78.95	91*	51*	2.80
Oct.	74.61	90*	49*	1.00	71.73	88*	57*	8.50
Nov.	67.99	91*	35*	0.70	67.64	84*	42*	1.77
Dec.	56.24	89*	23*	0.30	58.92	86*	32*	0.05
Jan.	59.01	77*	29*	0.90	54.72	79*	20*	0.05
Feb.	65.52	81*	38*	0.00	62.41	83	34	0.00
Mar.	69.06	93*	43*	0.30	68.42	84	39	1.64
April	74.09	99*	45*	0.10	76.24	91	56	0.82
May	77.21	94*	57*	3.40	80.02	93	62	0.27
June	82.29	102*	63*	0.78	82.55	93	71	1.78
Year	72.96	102*	23*	10.86	72.46	97*	30*	19.48

Month	1872-'73		Rain- fall in Min. inches		1873-'74		Rain- fall in Min. inches	
	Temperature Mean	Max.			Temperature Mean	Max.		
	•	•	•		•	•	•	
July	84.10	93	76	1.92	83.37	94*	63*	1.10
Aug.	82.58	96	72	4.19	82.09	95*	67*	1.98
Sept.	79.39	92	66	4.56	80.56	91	66*	25.35
Oct.	72.16	89	51	3.61	71.35	88	51*	2.81
Nov.	62.02	84	37	1.50	65.30	82	41*	1.71
Dec.	59.48	81	29	1.98	63.12	80	37*	2.10
Jan.	55.39	82	20	0.00	59.72	85	30*	0.86

³⁸ Wilson, op. cit., Circular No. 8.

General Development

Feb.	67.81	88	45	0.15	64.32	84	41*	1.48
Mar.	69.90	86	47	0.47	72.41	86	55*	1.90
April	71.12	91	49	0.59	68.27	86	44*	0.30
May	79.42	98*	60*	0.96	74.37	87	48*	1.34
June	82.08	95*	66*	0.43	80.74	91	69*	1.50
Year	72.12	98*	20	20.46	72.13	95*	30*	32.43

*These observations are made with self-registering thermometers.

The mean is from the standard thermometer.

Transportation and Communication

For a long time the fastest and most efficient means of reaching Fort Brown was by boat. Many old hulls are still fast in the bed of the Rio Grande, including the *Corvette*, which transported General Taylor, and which lies about 500 yards west of the International Bridge. Steamers of light draught also plied between Fort Brown and Fort Ringgold, 100 miles up the Valley (much farther by water.)

Transportation and communication in 1870 are well described in a report of William J. Wilson, then Assistant Surgeon, dated July 19th of that year.³⁹

The Morgan steamers, carrying the United States mail, are supposed to arrive at Brazos every alternate Tuesday; but it is generally every alternate Thursday, or perhaps later; should the weather be unfavorable, the mail is then brought by land direct to Brownsville. The river steamers pass up and down the river frequently,

³⁹ Wilson, op. cit., Circular No. 4.

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carrying freight and passengers. One of these steamers, also, goes up twice a month to Ringgold Barracks. A private telegraphic wire runs to Brazos and Clarksville, at the mouth of the Rio Grande. There is no telegraphic communication between Brazos and Corpus Christi, or Indianola, the nearest points from which communications can be made with the North. We cannot have a letter go from this place to department headquarters, or to Washington, and an answer received, in less time than a month. A mail rider leaves here every Monday, carrying the mail by land to Corpus Christi; and the mail from that place reaches Brownsville every Thursday evening. Letters leave here for Ringgold Barracks, by land, every Monday, and arrive every Friday.

Up to the year 1872 most cargo destined for Fort Brown and Ringgold had been unloaded at the Brazos, due to the shallow water on the bar at the Grande's mouth. The freight was then carried to Fort Brown by wagon. During that year the Rio Grande Railroad was completed. In 1904 the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad reached Brownsville.

Chapter XIV

Border Troubles

DURING THE LONG IRON RULE of Díaz, the government in the northern states of Mexico was fairly stable and a minimum of military supervision was required to maintain order along the border. Most of the time it was sufficient that the military forces were there and available to crush organized banditry if it occurred. During this period the military personnel at Fort Brown led a somewhat somnolent existence except for its experiences with disease and these contests became less and less frequent as improved medical care demonstrated that it was not the climate, as was at first believed, but the lack of drainage and the resultant insanitation that made the Post, for a number of years, the most unhealthful one in the United States. When an improved water supply was acquired, a modern system of sewers installed and mos-

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quito control established the Post became one of the most salubrious in the Army.. The civilian population of the area, the tens of thousands of annual visitors and the Army personnel now regard the climate as the most delightful in continental United States.

With the overthrow of the Diaz regime in Mexico City the relatively stable governments of the northern territories became labile, ever changing as one *Jefe* after another took over the reins of government in villages, cities and districts, and were in turn overthrown by an outraged populace or defeated by another "strongman" at the head of what was euphemistically termed an army, but what was in reality a collection of rabble interested only in loot. Although an occasional *Jefe* was imbued with patriotic motives and endeavored to establish order and protect the lives and property of the citizens, in the absence of an effective central government. However the majority of them were robbers, highwaymen and cutthroats. Their trail was blazed with pillage and murder. Much property south of the border was owned by citizens of the United States and many of our nationals lived there. These properties were the first to be looted and these citizens were the first to be murdered from ambush. The populace was inflamed against the *Gringos*. The unfortified boundary offered little hindrance to organized brigands and their depredations on

Border Troubles

the American side were of daily or nightly occurrence. Some Americans, whose herds or flocks had been stolen and driven across the border, whose ranch buildings had been burned and in some instances whose families had been murdered, took matters in their own hands and made retaliatory raids south of the Rio Grande. Military patrols hard upon the trail of raiders were sometimes charged with failing to see the border and exacting retribution where the perpetrators were caught, many miles beyond the limit of their sovereignty. To enhance their popularity the feeble regimes in Mexico City one after another adopted an anti-American attitude and vied with the bandits in demanding revenge upon the *Gringos*—a term of reproach applied indiscriminately to Americans. "International Incidents" multiplied apace. They became a hundred times more numerous, more grave and more provocative than those that brought about the Mexican War seven decades earlier.

A popular demand arose that United States troops be sent into Northern Mexico to establish order and protect the citizens of the United States residing in that area and at the same time protect border communities from pillage. The administration at Washington, apprehensive of our involvement in the war raging in Europe, resisted the demand but finally, in the summer of 1916, called into Federal service a large part

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of the National Guard and stationed it along the Mexican Border. This effectually ended the Mexican "incidents" and, as the United States was swept into World War I within a few months, the "border troubles" were soon forgotten.

As in the border disputes nearly three-quarters of a century earlier, Fort Brown again in 1916-17 became the principal United States Army station for defense of the border and a scene of great activity. A sketchy account of some of the better known skirmishes of these most recent border troubles follows:

On February 9, 1913 the Cadets of Chapultepec Military Academy freed the renowned Felix Díaz from prison. This acted as a spark which set off another of that nation's far-famed revolts. On the 24th of that month the Governor of Texas, Oscar B. Colquitt, received a communication from Cameron County's Judge and Sheriff, transmitting a request for aid from the American Consul in Matamoros, who claimed that Mexico's revolution was about to become a reign of pillage in the state of Tamaulipas. On the evening of February 26th the following units arrived at Brownsville, the same representing the governor's answer to the appeal from Matamoros and Brownsville:⁴⁰ Company C, 3rd Texas Infantry from Corpus

⁴⁰ Pierce, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

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Christi; Company A, 3rd Texas Infantry from Houston; and Company C, Texas State Cavalry, from Austin. About the same time Company M, 14th United States Cavalry, with Captain Kirby Walker in command, and Captain Sanders with eight state Rangers, arrived. The four National Guard companies did not remain long, departing for their home stations on July 28th.

On June 3rd of the same year a Mexican leader by the name of Lucio Blanco, presumably of the Constitutionalist Party, accompanied by an estimated 1200 followers, assailed the town of Matamoros, and captured it the next day. He then proceeded with raids, thefts, murders and depredations on the Texas side.

It developed later that Blanco was a supporter of Venustiano Carranza, who, in spite of President Wilson's declaration—that he would not recognize any Mexican executive who gained that position through assassination—was recognized as the logical head and first Chief of the Republic of Mexico in September 1914. This act of recognition was naturally resented by Carranza's main opponent, Francisco Villa, whose forces continued in the field against those of Mexico's newly recognized leader. The famous bandit's first act to show his resentment consisted of the assassination of seventeen Americans, who were taken from a train at Santa Ysabel, Chihuahua, while en

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route to the United States in response to Wilson's instructions that all Americans get out of Mexico.

Another depredation occurred on March 9, 1916, when a Villa band entered Columbus, New Mexico, and killed eight United States soldiers and ten civilians. This was too much, and served to bring about sterner action than had previously been taken on the part of the Federal authorities. The marauders were pursued a short distance into Mexico by Major Frank Thompkins and two troops of the 13th United States Cavalry. In addition to the 100 Mexicans killed before Villa's men could get away from Columbus, they lost 18 on their own ground.

Activities at Fort Brown grew rather intense from time to time, and by July 31, 1916 the forces there, under Major General James Parker, made a fairly formidable list:⁴¹

4th U. S. Infantry; 3rd U. S. Cavalry; 1st Virginia Infantry; 2nd Virginia Infantry; 1st Iowa Infantry; 2nd Iowa Infantry; 3rd Iowa Infantry; 1st Illinois Cavalry; Battalion Virginia Field Artillery; Battalion Iowa Field Artillery; 36th U. S. Infantry, organizing.

Skirmishes with Mexican raiders became quite frequent. The following instances, taken from Pierce (pp. 100-101), are typical:

June 14, 1916, a band of about 24 Mexicans crossed

⁴¹ Pierce, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

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into Texas 9 miles west from Brownsville at the place called Ranchito, a ranch on the American side just opposite to Rancho Tahuachal on the Mexican side. They were discovered about 9 miles northeast of San Benito by Captain Watson and a detachment of the U. S. Army who fired into them. One Mexican was afterwards found dead. Immediately upon receiving information at Ft. Brown, Gen. James Parker, who on May 18, 1916, had taken command of the District of Brownsville, ordered Lieut. A. D. Newman with fifty soldiers of Troop H, 3rd U. S. Cavalry, to go after the marauders. At 12 o'clock midnight, on the sixteenth, Newman and troops left Brownsville; at 4 o'clock on the morning of the seventeenth coming onto tracks of the bandits and following them to the Rio Grande, at 9 a. m. the Americans crossed the river by swimming their horses. They followed the trail of the Mexicans to Pedernal ranch, about a mile from the river near the crossing, and had a skirmish with some of them there, killing two. There were no casualties among the Americans.

On the seventeenth, at 1:30 p. m. Maj. Edward Anderson, with Troops E, Capt. John Read, Jr., and Lieut. George H. Peabody; F, Lieut. E. C. McGuire; G, Capt. William S. Wells, and with Machine Gun Troop of the 3rd Cavalry, Capt. Oscar Foley, left Fort Brown, accompanied by 20 men of the 4th U. S. Infantry, Lieut. Floyd R. Waltz, with two small boats loaded on motor trucks, and Lieut. J. H. Muncaster, with a wireless outfit. At about 6 p. m. the cavalry and machine gun troop crossed over at the Tahuachal ranch crossing (Longitude 97° 38' Latitude 26°), and marched eastward towards Matamoros, encamping for the night at Ranch Pascuala, three miles east of the crossing and seven miles west from Matamoros. Next morning, Sunday the eighteenth, orders from Washington recalled the Americans from Mexico.

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After the machine gun troops and all but Capt. Read's troop of Cavalry had crossed back to the American side, Carranzistas fired on the rear guard of the Americans. Upon orders from Colonel Bullard, then at the scene but on the American side in command of his regiment of the 26th Infantry, the cavalry chased the Carranzistas eastward until the dust thrown up by their horses' hoofs shielded them so that it was impossible to locate them. In this encounter two Carranzistas were killed, one a subaltern officer. No casualties were suffered by the Americans.

On the morning of the eighteenth, Colonel Bullard, then at Harlingen, dispatched a battalion of the 26th to Fort Brown and with the other battalions proceeded to protect Major Anderson's crossing. One boat load of his eager 26th Infantry had already reached the Mexican shore when the wireless conveyed the orders of withdrawal.

In talking with non-commissioned officers of the 12th Cavalry who were present at Fort Brown during the Border Troubles, the author of this volume gained some first-hand information regarding the conditions extant at this time and place. These veterans relate stories similar to the above in which they were active participants. I recall one sergeant who spoke of manning a machine gun on the Post Hospital, and firing on any Mexican seen crossing the border in the vicinity of the Reservation. On the other hand, walking from one building to another on the American side was not considered safe.

Gradually, however, the Americans grew

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weary of the excitement, and realized the futility of paper protests, short pursuits and withdrawal orders. Consequently, General John J. Pershing entered Mexico (March 15, 1916) with the First Punitive Expedition, and to make a long story short the Border Troubles came to a close.

Chapter XV

Modern Times

IN 1933 BROWNSVILLE was visited by another great hurricane. Fort Brown was hard hit. Nearly all the frame buildings were destroyed. Military personnel took refuge in the brick Hospital and Headquarters buildings. Water was not less than knee deep at any point on the Post.

Today Fort Brown is unquestionably one of the most attractive stations in the United States. The storm was followed by reconstruction, most of the officers' quarters on the resaca side being made hurricane-proof. Palm trees grace some of the streets and carpet grass covers the lawns. Oranges, grapefruit and papayas ripen in the yards.

The Rio Grande Delta (or Valley, as it is more commonly called), is today a prosperous region. Brownsville boasts a terminal airport

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for three main lines. Eastern and Braniff ply the south, north, east and middlewest. The great Pan-American carries passengers and mail to Mexico, Central America, Panama and South America. Although the airport has no present military significance (except as a turning point for student-pilots from the several Army fields around San Antonio), it may become very important in the future's network of defense. The air-transportation industry is Brownsville's largest.

The development of water transport nearly matches that by air. If the seamen of Zachary Taylor's day could see the freighters of the present moving down the canal from the Gulf of Mexico to the Port of Brownsville, how wide their eyes would open in salute to modern navigation. Then there are the three railroads (Missouri Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Rio Grande—Port Isabel), and various truck lines, which annually carry away from the Valley hundreds of thousands of tons of citrus fruits, winter vegetables and cotton. Trains, buses and automobiles bring thousands of tourists to Brownsville each winter.

As this writing on "Fort Brown Historical" is concluded (June 17, 1941), there are no troops at Fort Brown, save a handful left there to maintain the property. The 12th Cavalry departed for Fort Bliss (El Paso) last winter. National Guardsmen took place of the 12th,

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but they too were transferred to Fort Bliss in the late Spring. But the barracks of Fort Brown will not long remain vacant. Should the United States again become involved in war the forces assigned to this Post will have a large and important field to guard and cover. The station is already under consideration for location of units equipped with the most modern weapons of defense.

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